# THE PASTORAL USEFULNESS OF KIERKEGAARD'S THEORY OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

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The Parishonners of St. David's in Richmond, Ca.

gave me hospitality, support and love

while I attended GTU and prepared for my degree.

This dissertation is dedicated to them.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION . . . . . . . . . . . . . 1

Chapter I "The Command to Preach the Good News" 4
- The Call to Preach (4)
- The Problem of Preaching (7)
- Preaching as an Act of Faith (11)

Chapter II "A Theology Useful for Proclamation" 13
- Liberalism (14)
- Neo-Orthodoxy (18)
- Conclusion (24)

Chapter III "Spelling Out a Pastoral Criterion for Today" 28
- A. Josef Jungmann (29)
- B. Paul Tillich (49)
- C. Karl Rahner (74)
- D. Conclusion (105)

Chapter IV "Kierkegaard's Theology Appears to Meet Today's Pastoral Criterion" 111
- A. Historical (112)
- B. Anthropocentric (130)
- C. Christocentric (133)
- D. Mystagogic (137)

Chapter V "A Project to Explore the Pastoral Usefulness of Kierkegaard's Theory of Human Development: Basic Design" 139
- A. Initial Development (139)
- B. My Input: The Working Kierkegaard Paper (142)
- C. My Input: A Diagram and Handouts (180)
- D. Collecting Feedback (187)

Chapter VI "A Project to Explore the Pastoral Usefulness of Kierkegaard's Theory of Human development: Implementation, Feedback, Conclusion 193
- A. Project Implementation and Feedback: Homilies at Daily Mass (193)
- B. Project Implementation and Feedback: Three Day Retreat (204)
- C. Project Implementation and Feedback: Adult Education Class (215)
- D. Conclusion (227)

Chapter VII " The Pastoral Usefulness of Kierkegaard's Theory of Human Development: Overview and Postscript" 229b

Bibliography A: Preaching and Pastoral Theology 230

Bibliography B: Kierkegaard Project 237

# INTRODUCTION

The search for pastorally useful theologies through which to make its proclamation should be a perennial concern of the Christian church. This dissertation attempts to answer the question: Is Kierkegaard's theory of human development of pastoral usefulness today? Briefly, its main outline is as follows:

## Chapter I: "The Command to Proclaim the Good News"

The Christian church has been commanded to proclaim the good news of God's self-communication in Jesus. Surveys and common pastoral experience, however, indicate a decrease of interest and enthusiasm regarding church proclamation. A number of explanations have been offered. While it is not up to the church to make God's word "relevant," it certainly must concern us to avoid making God's word appear irrelevant and trivial.

## Chapter II: "A Theology Useful for Proclamation"

Theology is constitutive of proclamation. A theology useful for church proclamation must be not merely true scripturally, magisterially, dialectically. It must also evidence a power to reach people -- to communicate, intrigue, unsettle. The given Gospel (enduring insight of neo-Orthodoxy) must be proclaimed to the given age (enduring insight of liberalism).

## Chapter III: "Spelling Out a Pastoral Criterion for Today"

What qualities should a theology have to be pastorally effective for our given age? A survey of J. Jungmann, P. Tillich and K. Rahner (all of whom dealt directly with this issue) yields a remarkable consensus. Although coming from distinct perspectives, using terms with differing nuances, all three substantially agree that a pastorally useful theology for today must be historical (in touch with contemporary questions and concerns), anthropocentric (experiential), Christocentric and mystagogic.

Chapter IV: "Kierkegaard's Theology Appears to Meet Today's Pastoral Criterion"

A brief examination supports the hypothesis that Kierkegaard is historical (i.e., he deals with questions of vital concern today), anthropocentric, Christocentric and mystagogical.

Chapter V: "A Project to Explore the Pastoral Usefulness of Kierkegaard's Theory of Human Development: Basic Design"

In order to test out the hypothesis that Kierkegaard's theory of human development is pastorally useful, a "working Kierkegaard Paper" was developed that focused on central Kierkegaardian themes in a popularly accessible way. This input, presented in a way that tried to respect Kierkegaard's concern that subjectivity and free will be respected, would be shared with volunteer groups in the contexts of daily mass homilies, a retreat, and an adult religious education class. Feedback from the groups would be collected through questionnaire, oral history technique interviews of a random sample (one interview conducted by me and the other by an apparantly unconnected third party), and my personal observation.

Chapter VI: "A Project to Explore the Pastoral Usefulness of Kierkegaard's Theory of Human Development: Implementation and Feedback"

## Chapter VII: "The Pastoral Usefulness of Kierkegaard's Theory of Human Development: Overview and Postscript"

This chapter explains why the answer to our original question -- Is Kierkegaard's theory of human development pastorally useful -- seems to be a resounding YES.

This dissertation has given me a deeper respect for the vision of Kierkegaard, an awe at the depth of subjectivity contained in the people I met through the project, and a strong sense that the Christian community should empirically test (with actual groups of people) the various candidate theologies for its proclamation, if it is to find a proclamation of the given Gospel that is truly *for this given age*.

# CHAPTER I

## THE COMMAND TO PROCLAIM THE GOOD NEWS

The Christian Church is intimately bound up in communications. Its origin is communication: God's self-communication made in Jesus of Nazareth, a communication extended to the apostles at Pentecost. Its purpose is communication: it exists to communicate God's self gift in Jesus to the ends of the earth. Communication makes communion possible—communion between God and people, between people and their neighbors, between people and their own selves. The archetypal way of communicating the Christian message has been preaching.

### The Call to Preach

Preaching is characteristic of Christianity. No other world religion has assigned such a central place to the personal proclamation of its message. Although Judaism had something similar in its prophets and later in its synagogue readers and commentators, preaching never attained an important part in the official temple worship. Neither Jewish religion nor Greek philosophy gave to preaching the central importance it has always had in the Christian Church.[1]

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[1] John A. Broadus, On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons, rev. and ed. by Jesse Burton Weatherspoon (New York: Harper & Bros., 1944), p. 1.

Jesus himself had repeatedly commanded his followers to preach the good news of salvation, the news that God was entering into table fellowship with sinners and that his way of righteousness was available to anyone who accepts and chooses it. There are perhaps thirty different New Testament terms to describe the activity of preaching—proclaim, announce, preach, teach, explain, speak, say, testify, confess, charge, persuade, admonish, etc.[2]

This centrality afforded preaching in the Christian tradition is not accidental. Personal proclamation is a particularly apt language form for a religion convinced that the primary medium of God's revelation is history, the personal order in which we are with one another. In his classic book The Servant of the Word, Herbert Farmer writes:

> Preaching is that divine, saving activity in history, which began two thousand years ago in the advent of Christ and in His personal relationships with men and women, and has continued throughout the ages in the sphere of redeemed personal relationships (which is the true Church), now focusing on me, confronting me, as a person indissolubly bound up with other persons at this present time. This focusing on me is not apart from what had gone before, nor can it be, for it is part of the continuous purpose through the years which began in Christ; hence preaching is telling me something. But it is not merely telling me something. It is God actively probing me, challenging my will, calling on me for decision, offering me His succour, through the only medium which the nature of His purpose permits Him to use, the

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[2] C. F. Hans Kung, The Church, trans. Ray and Rosaleen Ockenden (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1967), p. 375.

> medium of a personal relationship. It is as though, to adapt the Apostle's words, "God did beseech me by you." It is God's "I-Thou" relationship with me carried on by your "I-Thou" relationship with me....[3]

For Farmer, God never enters into personal relationships with human beings apart from other human beings.

Phillips Brooks many years before had also reached this same conclusion about the suitability of preaching as the Christian communication form. Preaching is "the communication of truth through personality," and as such is preeminently adapted to the truth of Christianity "for that truth is preeminently personal. However the Gospel may be capable of statement in dogmatic form, its truest statement we know is not in dogma but in personal life. Christianity is Christ; and we can easily understand how a truth which is of such peculiar character that a person can stand forth and say of it 'I am the Truth,' must always be best conveyed through, must indeed be almost incapable of being perfectly conveyed except through personality."[4]

It is through the preaching of the Gospel that the church is created. Men and women are summoned to join the community of the new way. And as the church is called into existence by the proclaimed word, its existence in turn becomes the foundation of preaching.[5]

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[3] Herbert Farmer, The Servant of the Word (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1942), p. 28.

[4] Phillips Brooks, Lectures on Preaching (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1877), p. 7.

[5] Rudolph K. Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament, trans. Kendrick Grobel (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951), Vol. I, p. 308.

## The Problem of Preaching

Yet when all the glorious theological assertions about preaching have been made, there remains more to be said. In 1857, Anthony Trollope wrote, "There is, perhaps, no greater hardship at present inflicted on mankind in civilized and free countries, than the necessity of listening to sermons."[6] Hopefully, there is an element of overstatement here, yet it cannot be denied that the average church member is less than totally enthusiastic about standard church preaching. According to national surveys of religion in America, the situation is worsening. In 1952, a full 43 percent of Roman Catholics considered their neighborhood sermons excellent. By 1965, the figures had fallen to a mere 30 percent, and by 1974, only 23 percent of Catholics would describe the sermons they heard as excellent.[7] A 1978 survey of Baltimore Archdiocese Catholics showed the mean evaluation of sermons as only slightly above "fair."[8]

Nor is discontent with church preaching confined to the congregation. The clergy themselves are by no means united in their enthusiasm. According to an unpublished Dutch survey, the clergy are even less enthusiastic about sitting through sermons than the laity.[9] Usually the members of a higher profession can judge the quality of professional services more accurately than their clients!

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[6] Quoted by Henri J. M. Nouwen in Creative Ministry (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Co., 1971), p. 22.

[7] Andrew Greeley, Crisis in the Church: A study of Religion in America (Chicago: Thomas More Press, 1979), pp. 97-98.

[8] "Report on Preaching Survey conducted in the Catholic Review," a survey conducted by the Clergy Education Committee, Archdiocese of Baltimore. Baltimore, 1978. (Mimeographed.)

There have been many explanations for the ineffectiveness of so much modern preaching. Philologist Amos Wilder maintains we are going through a primordial event in human culture--the death and birth of language.[10] One can see a groping, stumbling search for better expression quite vividly in the grammatical and metaphorical contortions of modern poetry. Common language has become so vague and undifferentiated, Wilder maintains, that we may well "have to become dumb before we can use names and words faithfully again."[11] A lack of vigor and vivid meaning is especially apparent in religious discourse.

Another obstacle to successful preaching is what Bernard Lonergan has labelled scotosis, the unconscious process of interior censorship of painful new insights.[12] Scotosis explains why we usually hear what we want to hear and see what we want to see. Painful new data that might force us into new perspectives and a reorientation of life are spontaneously repressed. On those occasions when the unwanted information does reach us, it is made to appear implausible, flukish, and not worthy of further consideration.

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[9] Cf. Osmund Schreuder, "The Mechanics of Preaching," pp. 41-42 of The Renewal of Preaching (Concilium 33), ed. Karl Rahner (New York: Paulist Press, 1968).

[10] Amos N. Wilder, Early Christian Rhetoric (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971), pp. 1-2.

[11] Ibid., p. 1.

[12] Bernard J. F. Lonergan, S. J., Insight (New York: Philosophical Library, 1970), pp. 191-196.

Communication specialists have dealt with this same phenomenon under the label "mechanisms of selection."[13] People tend to listen, respond to and remember most efficiently those communications that happen to agree with their own views, feelings, needs and interests. It is difficult to get a challenging message over before one is "switched off." Since the goal of preaching is not merely the dissemination of fresh information but also a challenge to change--the tone of preaching being not merely reflexive but responsive--this is a serious problem.

Often the Gospel challenge is not put off by anything as serious as straightforward denial. Instead, there can be a certain tendency to toy with the issue, refusing to come to real decision. Phillips Brooks has expressed this grim situation very well.

> I have often heard the minister's appeals compared to the lawyer's addresses to the jury. "Look," men say, "the lawyer pleads, and gets his verdict." "You plead a hundred times. You argue week after week, and men will not decide that Christianity is true, nor steadfastly resolve to lead a new life." The fallacy is obvious. We are like lawyers pleading before a jury, which in the first place feels itself under no compulsion to decide at all; and in the second place, if

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[13] Osmund Schreuder, op. cit., pp. 41-42.

> it decides as we are urging it, must change its life, break off its habits, and make new ones, which it does not like to contemplate. There is no likeness between it and that body of twelve men, who cannot go home till they decide one way or the other, and who have no selfish interest to bias their decision. No wonder that our jury listens as long as it pleases, perhaps trembles a little when we are most true and powerful, and then, like Felix, who was both judge and jury to St. Paul, shuts up the court, and departs with only the dimmest feeling of responsibility, saying, "Go thy wav for this time. I will hear thee again of this matter."[14]

The (perceived) sheer redundancy of the message can also diminish the chances of a truly effective preaching. Priests I know have said they wish the people in the pews had never heard a particular Gospel story before. Perhaps then they would be jarred and caught up in what they hear. Unfortunately, the actual situation seems to be churchfulls of people who have "heard" the message so often they no longer hear it. Henry J. M. Nouwen writes:

> If we say that preaching means announcing the good news, it is important to realize that for most people there is absolutely no news in the sermon. Practically nobody listens to a sermon with the expectation of hearing something they did not already know. They have heard about Jesus--His disciples, His sayings, His miracles, His death and resurrection--at home, in kindergarten, in grade school, in high school and in college so often and in so many different ways and forms that the last thing they expect to come from a pulpit is any news. And the core of the Gospel--"You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind and you must love your neighbor as yourself"--has been repeated

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[14] Phillips Brooks, op. cit., p. 186.

> so often and so persistently that it has lost, for the majority of people, even the slightest possibility of evoking any response.[15]

Beyond the vagueness of language, internal resistance to enlightenment, and the redundancy of the message are still further "intervening factors" that hinder a sermon's success. Consider, for example, people's differing forms of belief and their subjective reactions to the preacher, or the preacher himself and the unconscious agenda he may bring to his task. All the above make genuine communication difficult, even assuming that the preacher is highly skilled and sincere.

## Preaching as an Act of Faith

In view of all the difficulties mentioned above, it might be wondered why anyone in his right mind would try to preach God's word at all. We are not the first to ask the question.[16] It goes at least as far back as Moses. "But, Lord, never in my life have I been a man of eloquence, either before or since you have spoken to your servant. I am a slow speaker and not able to speak well." God's answer is well known: "Who gave man his mouth? . . . Who makes him dumb or deaf, gives him sight or leaves him blind? Is it not I, Yahweh? Now go. I shall help you to speak and tell you what you are to say." (Exodus 4:10-12)

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[15] Henri Houwen, op. cit., p. 25.

[16] Daniel T. Jenkins takes stark exception to the notion that the problems facing preaching today are any worse than yesterday's: "It is a sure sign that a man is an uncritical and immature child of his own age when he imagines that his own time is unique in being confronted, especially in the sphere of religion, with problems of a difficulty and complexity far exceeding those which troubled the existence of his naive forefathers, who are alleged always to have been blessed with simple faith. Certainly the problems of communication which confront us as Christians today are grave enough but their uniqueness consists not in their gravity but simply in their being our problems. Moses' question has arisen in different forms in every age. In every age also, God's answer has been given." "Message to Ministers about the Communication of the Gospel," Theology Today 6 (July 1949), p. 174.

Preaching with efficacy may well appear impossible. The fact is, however, that we have been commanded to preach--and the Lord, by giving the command, surely grants the condition for carrying it out. Preaching then is essentially a charismatic activity. It is an act of faith. The church has consistently affirmed the soverign place of Christ as the prime author of all communication of salvation. Jesus himself has promised: "He who hears you hears me." (Luke 10:16)

# CHAPTER II

## A THEOLOGY USEFUL FOR PROCLAMATION

In spite of considerable obstacles, effective proclamation is still possible because the Lord commands us to do it. This does not justify, however, a quietism in church preaching--a tossing out of anything whatever to the congregation, trusting that God will provide. After all, we have been enjoined to be innocent as doves, but wise as serpents. While there is no question of coming up with a foolproof preaching that inevitably leads people to Gospel commitment, there certainly must be found a preaching that makes such a choice for the Gospel possible. It is presumptuous to attempt to make the Gospel "relevant"--yet it is certainly important to avoid making it appear irrelevant (and the possibilities in this latter direction are mind-boggling!).

A critical element of any preaching is its theological content. While preaching is primarily a charismatic activity, theology remains constitutive, something more than a mere prerequisite. Even the most primitive kerygma of the church embodies theology. Indeed, a certain theological development can be seen even within the kerygma of the New Testament.[1]

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[1] Karl Rahner, "Theology in the New Testament," Theological Investigations, Vol. V (New York: Seabury Press, 1975), p. 28.

But what kind of theology would be most appropriate for church proclamation today? In the history of the Christian Church there have been many ways of relating the command to preach the Gospel with the search for a kerygmatically suitable theology. Two recent approaches that provide a revealing contrast are liberalism and neo-orthodoxy. Both have provided insights of such permanent value for the life of the church that they will be examined here.

## Liberalism

Liberalism (or modernism, as certain of its Catholic manifestations are sometimes called) originated at the turn of the nineteenth century as a reaction to the sterile scholasticism of the previous two centuries. This scholastic theology had largely consisted of minute dissections of doctrinal issues that had been controverted at the time of the Reformation. The upsurge of lively Reformation faith had stopped; its issues had ceased to be objects of widespread concern. What became left as the content of theology were the terminology and creedal statements and conceptualizations of that past era. Language and world views had changed; theology had not.[2] Theological assertions appeared more and more extrinsic, more and more unrelated to the practical world of experience.

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[2] For a concise treatment of the problematic situation that gave birth to the liberal movement in theology, see C. W. Christian, Friedrich Schleiermacher (Waco, Texas: World Books, 1979), pp. 19-27.

Many impulses converged to form liberalism--romanticism (with its feel for the interrelated oneness of life instead of the dissociated multiplicity of the questiones disputatae), pietism, the Kantian return to the subject (and the location of knowledge in the consciousness of the subject), and the pressure of the growing secularization of society.[3]

The programme of liberalism was the reinterpretation of the kerygma in categories of contemporary consciousness. Instead of retreating into fideism, liberalism attempted to create a theology which would reflect contemporary experience. Only such a theology would enable the church to reach its "cultured despisers."

The classical exponent of this view is, of course, Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) often called "the father of modern theology." For him, the primal experience underlying all concrete acts of knowing, feeling and doing was the immediate feeling of absolute dependence. Feeling in Schleiermacher's sense is not primarily emotion but the immediate consciousness that the human self is not self-originating or self-sustaining. Our center is not in ourselves. We experience ourselves as "given."

This feeling of absolute dependence is the religious condition.[4] It is a basic quality of every human being, even though it may not yet have been mediated into one's consciousness through the concrete. Dogma and theology are the church's articulation of this feeling of absolute dependence. They do not create religion, but are the products of man's naturally religious consciousness.[5]

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[3] See John Dillengerger and Claude Welsh, Protestant Christianity (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1955), pp. 180-183.

[4] Friedrich Schleiermacher, The Christian Faith, ed. H. R. Mackintosh and J. S. Stewart (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1948) pp. 12-18.

Theological statements have validity insofar as they are expressions of this religious consciousness.[6] Since the church is a living, changing historical reality, how it articulates its feeling of absolute dependence will also be living and changing. Dogmatic theology is "the science which systematizes the doctrine prevalent in a Christian Church at a given time."[7]

Schleiermacher's clear distinction between religion and theology, between faith and doctrine was to have profoundly liberating implications. The old creedal statements, so abstract and unmoving, were no longer to be approached as sacred timeless truth. Faith was one thing; the derived statements about faith something else. The church was free to originate new symbols as ways to express its religious feeling.

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[5] Ibid., pp. 76-78.

[6] For Schleiermacher there are three kinds of theological statements: (1) descriptions of the human states of mind, (2) concepts of divine attributes, and (3) assertions about the constitution of the world. Type 1 is the basic form of theological statement, and the other types are valid only to the extent that they can be developed from type 1. (The Christian Faith, pp. 140-141.)

[7] Ibid., p. 88.

Liberalism saw clearly the need to proclaim the Gospel in the secular vernacular. Human consciousness is naturally religious. It is for theology to take this consciousness seriously, accepting it and dialoguing with it in whatever historical and cultural forms it happens to express itself. Theology itself must be derived from the religious consciousness of the contemporary world. Gospel truth does not merely withstand but actually thrives on reinterpretation and reformulation into the contemporary idiom.

The enduring insight of liberalism is incarnational—the revelation of God and the experience people have as they live, move, relate to each other, have something to do with each other. The world of ours is not so completely alienated from God that it has ceased to be God's world. To deny such a position would seem to be an almost blasphemous denial both of the goodness of God and of his common sense. The creation is always God's creation; and we do not honor him if we assume that he has let it get so completely out of hand that nothing of his is still to be found in it.[8]

Liberalism refuses to allow theology to degenerate into a list of crystallized creedal assertions having no relation to experience. It attempts to overcome the obstacle to faith that Jesuit Paul Thion describes well in a Lumen Vitae discussion:

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[8] Norman W. Pittenger, Proclaiming Christ Today (Greenwich, Conn.: Seabury Press, 1962), p. 90.

> I remember a course of lectures I gave this year .... I began by saying that man had known a certain number of "objective representations" of Revelation as a Word of God which stemmed from his external world, as it were, and that whether he encountered it as the word of the prophets or as the word of the sacred writers, he regarded it as an external voice which gave him food for thought. I think that, where the average mentality is concerned, many people still conceive the revealed message in this fashion. But nowadays this way of envisaging Revelation is becoming increasingly "implausible." For centuries many people were able to adhere to the mystery of Christ through a representation of this kind; but today it makes the mystery seem wholly extrinsic and unrelated to existence. In actual fact the Christian mystery was expressed by means of symbols, of representations in which we no longer recognize our own life today (or not always). People continue to repeat: "Christ is our light," but when we ask, "What does 'Christ is our light' mean,?" we realize that these are words with a bare minimum of content.[9]

Liberalism was an ambitious attempt to bring the Gospel into the modern, post-Enlightenment world. Its proponents believed that the Gospel was more profound than any crystallized manifestation of it, and that it could be reinterpreted for the "cultured despisers" of the nineteenth century. Liberalism took the hearer of the message and his experience seriously. In a more profound way, perhaps, than any other theology, it attempted to listen to the world and its experience before it spoke.

## Neo-Orthodoxy

Liberalism had stressed the importance of making the Gospel message intelligible to this given age. It was at pains to ground the assertions of the church in human experience. And yet, if this communicability to the present age becomes the sole criterion for theology, there can result such an accommodation to secular culture and terminology that one ends up preaching what is characteristic of the age rather than what is characteristic of the Gospel. One can give too much authority to modern thought, accepting its pretensions at face value, and censuring from the Gospel those elements which do not commend themselves to the current culture. One can become uncritically optimistic about history and human intelligence, at its worse proclaiming what "modern man" complacently believes anyway.

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[9] "Experience and Revelation: Symposium," Lumen Vitae 22 (December 1967), pp. 645-646.

At the turn of this century, P. T. Forsyth was accusing liberalism of just such shortcomings, claiming it was cutting down or enlarging Christianity according to some pop rational canon of life or nature.

> Religion is to-day debased to a mere means of human happiness, to a social utility, as it never was before. It was once a political pawn, it is now a social facility. And the result is unfaith, or worse, an affectation of faith. We are so healthy, so poetical, so kindly, so optimistic. God's love and patience and mercy are all so much in line with life's innocent charm, all so much a matter of course and of congratulation. And we are so strange to heart-hunger, or soul-despair, or passionate gratitude, or heavenly home-sickness. Whole tracts of our religion are bare of spiritual passion, depth. Christianity speaks the language of our human civilization; it does not speak the language of Christ. The age, and much of the Church, believes in civilization and is interested in the Gospel, instead of believing in the Gospel and being interested in civilization.[10]

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[10] P. T. Forsyth, Positive Preaching and the Modern Mind (Cincinnati: Jennings and Graham, 1970), pp. 193-194. Cf. also ibid., p. 210.

Uncritical liberalism, with its faith in human intelligence and irresistible progress, was doomed to dissolve with the collapse of natural optimism. Although this collapse, Forsyth thought, would come later to a vigorous young people like Americans,[11] the beginnings could already be seen in Europe. Eventually, even the "young men too shall grow weary, and their strength shall utterly fail."

The collapse came in the wake of World War I. The war saw the total collapse of middle-class progressive ideas and values, severe political upheaval as democracies replaced monarchies, tremendous social disorder stemming from widespread war deaths (over 350,000 in France alone). There were enormous economic problems of reconstruction, huge war debts and indemnities, and increasing criminality. In theology there was an inevitable turn from subjectivity and the validity of human experience to a stress on the objectivity of revelation and the need to return to orthodoxy.

The book that marked this transition from liberalism to the new orthodoxy was Karl Barth's Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, first published in 1918.[12] It would be difficult to overestimate the impact of this book, occasioned by young Pastor Barth's discovery, as he tried to preach to his congregation week after week, that liberalism had given him no Gospel to proclaim.[13]

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[11] Ibid., p. 231.

[12] For a fascinating account of Romerbrief's genesis and a brief summary of its content, cf. Wilhelm Pauck's excellent Karl Barth: Prophet of a New Christianity? (New York and London: Harper & Bros., 1931), pp. 54-60.

Barth's new insight, whose expressive power and passion almost made the 400-page book glow in the dark, was the holiness and righteousness of God. God is God, and his Word stands in judgement over against man. The Bible is not concerned with man's discovery of God, or with "religious experience." It is not human beings who seek God. Rather, the Bible tells us that God seeks us--God who is Lord of history, wholly free and wholly other. Man does not hold God accountable, but God holds man accountable. Human experience does not inform our notion of God. The Word of God should inform our notions of religious experience.

Barth's proclamation that true religion begins with God and not with man found wide and immediate public sympathy. Barth was not at all prepared for such an enthusiastic response. He compares his experience to that of someone climbing a church steeple in the middle of the night. To steady himself, he unknowingly grasped the bell rope and roused the whole town![14]

The neo-orthodox movement which Barth set in motion is a true antithesis to the liberal identification of nature and grace. For Barth,

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[13] John Dillenberger and Claude Welch; op. cit., p. 256.

[14] Ibid., p. 257.

God is in heaven, and man is on earth. Nature and grace stand in opposition. Nature is fallen, tragically fallen, and there is no such thing as analogy of being or any connection whatever between finite and infinite. Between God and the world is an infinite chasm. Theology must begin, then, not with man listening for a word from God, but the Word of God coming into history enabling man to hear it.

Neo-orthodoxy's enduring insight is the sheerly objective, historical, underived givenness of Christian revelation. It begins not with human experience or human thought but a historical event. In the words of Herbert Farmer:

> The essential content of Christianity therefore is not something which man, even of superlative intellectual and spiritual power, could ever discover by the exercise of their own powers. For reflection can never establish the actuality of a historical event. The most it can establish is the possibility of an event, or at most, if the event has conveners and parallels, its probability. An event can only establish itself--by happening, by being given. And it can only become generally known by being borne witness to, by being proclaimed, by the story being told. The more unparalleled it is, the more, obviously, this is so.[15]

The Gospel does not rise from human beings; it descends on them. It is not a spelling out of our inate psychic spiritual experience. It is not discovered but revealed. It is of grace, not of works. To quote P. T. Forsyth once more:

> It is but a little way that experience will carry the herald of the Gospel. He has to expound a message which, because

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[15] Herbert Farmer, The Servant of the Word (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1942), p. 17.

> it is eternal, far transcends his experience. He has to do more than set to it his own personal seal. Every Christian has to do that. The preacher has to be sure of a knowledge that creates experience, and does not rise out of it. His burthen is something given, something that reports a world beyond experience, a world that is not of experience, though always in its shape.... His experience covers but his own soul, or at most a few besides that he touches; yet he has to declare a certainty about the eternal destiny of the whold world, and the eternal will of the whole God. That is a knowledge far beyond experience. It is not realizable except in experience, but experience could not reach it, could not assure it. It is a knowledge that comes by faith.[16]

Like their liberal forbearers, the neo-orthodox theologicans began with an important insight--the Gospel is not derived from human experience but given to it. Yet this assertion, pushed too far and exclusively, involved them also in a serious difficulty. If uncritical liberalism had overemphasized the difficulty of communicating the Gospel to a secular age, uncritical neo-orthodoxy had a tendency to deny that there was any problem at all.[17] It was enough simply to proclaim the biblical passages or the classical creedal statements of the early church. To worry about exposing common bases of experience, etc., or to be concerned about the cultural situation of their hearers was for some of them a lack of faith in God's spirit.

In contrast to a frank situational realism, proponents of neo-orthodoxy sometimes preached on the basis of a basic revivalistic principle of former days--the premise that "soul-winning" was achieved through proclaiming the Gospel message to a universally uniform entity, the soul. William Adamson describes this principle well:

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[16] P. T. Forsyth, op. cit., pp. 200-201.

[17] D. T. Jenkins, "Message to Ministers about the Communication of the Gospel," Theology Today 6 (July 1949), p. 178.

> Life conditions were held to be irrelevant because the same needs, the same desires, the same values were universally attributed to all these immortal souls. Consequently men could everywhere be approached in one and the same way for they were considered as incarnated souls rather than as animated bodies that were shaped and influenced deeply by their relations with other people and by environment. There was a sharp division between the saved and the damned. Hearing and responding were assumed to be a simple matter dependent upon an act of will.[18]

## Conclusion: A Theology Useful for Proclamation

The church is under mandate to preach the Gospel of Jesus as effectively as it can. There is certainly no need to make the Gospel relevant. As God's word it is permanently relevant to the human condition. There is need, however, to avoid making the Gospel appear irrelevant.

An element of church preaching that bears investigation in this respect is the theology used. Theology is a constitutive element of all preaching, even that of the New Testament itself. What type of theology is most apt for church preaching today?

Neo-orthodoxy replies that it must be a theology that respects the objective givenness of the Gospel. The Gospel has a reality and validity of its own; it is something more than a distillation of what everyone is already experiencing anyway. Paul VI's influential encyclical "On Evangelization in the Modern World," reflects this same conviction: "Evangelization risks losing its power and disappearing altogether if one empties or adulterates its content under the pretext of translating it."[19]

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[18] "The Communication of the Christian Gospel of Salvation to Laymen" (Berkeley, CA: typed thesis, 1955), p. 119.

On the other hand, liberalism maintains that a theology useful for church preaching must be capable of vital contact with the people to whom the message is addressed. It must apeak to them in language and images that do not render the Gospel message unintelligible.[20] After all, God and the world have something to do with each other. The Second Vatical Council's pastoral constitution "The Church Today" expresses this concern:

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[19] (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Catholic Conference Publications Office, 1976), par. 63, p. 46.

[20] Bernard Lonergan has written of this matter in regard to the foreign missions: "The Christian message is to be communicated to all nations. Such communication presupposes that preachers and teachers enlarge their horizons to include an accurate and intimate understanding of the culture and the language of the people they address. They must grasp the virtual resources of that culture and that language, and they must use those virtual resourses creatively so that the Christian message becomes, not disruptive of the culture, not an alien patch superimposed upon it, but a line of development within the culture ...

Now, a classicist would feel it was perfectly legitimate for him to impose his culture on others. For he conceives culture normatively, and he conceives his own to be the norm.... In contrast, the pluralist acknowledges a multiplicity of cultural traditions.... He does not consider it his task either to promote the differentiation of consciousness or to ask people to renounce their own culture. Rather, he would proceed from within the culture and he would seek ways and means for making it into a vehicle for communicating the Christian message."

Method in Theology (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972) pp. 362-363.

> Furthermore, while adhering to the methods and requirements proper to theology, theologians are invited to seek continually for more suitable ways of communicating doctrine to the men of their times. For the deposit of faith or revealed truths are one thing; the manner in which they are formulated without violence to their meaning and significance is another.[21]

This line of thought was also continued in Pope Paul VI's encyclical "On Evangelization in the Modern World:"

> On us particularly, the pastors of the Church, rests the responsibility for reshaping with boldness and wisdom, but in complete fidelity to the content of evangelization, the means that are most suitable and effective for communicating the Gospel message to the men and women of our times....
>
> This question of "how to evangelize" is permanently relevant, because the methods of evangelizing vary according to the different circumstances of time, place and culture, and because they thereby present a certain challenge to our capacity for discovery and adaptation.[22]
>
> Evangelization loses much of its force and effectiveness if it does not take into consideration the actual people to whom it is addressed, if it does not use their language, their signs and symbols, if it does not answer the questions they ask, and if it does not have an impact on their concrete life.[23]

A theology useful for church preaching must reflect the enduring insights of both neo-orthodoxy and liberalism. With neo-orthodoxy, it will accept that the Gospel it preaches is a given Gospel, whose contents it cannot censure at whim. Such a theology will hold itself liable to biblical and historical-traditional criteria. With liberalism, however, the church must accept that its mandate is to proclaim the given Gospel to this given age. It will be concerned that its proclamation be expressed in a form that connects with these people—intriguing them, unsettling them, challenging them. In other words, in addition to being answerable to biblical and historical-traditional criteria, theology must also answer to a pastoral criterion.

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[21] The Documents of Vatical II, ed. Walter M. Abbot, S. J. (New York: Guild Press, America Press, Association Press, 1966), p. 270.

[22] Op. cit., par. 40, p. 27.

[23] Ibid., par. 63, p. 46.

Although this pastoral criterion can never be the sole arbiter in the search for a theology suitable for the preaching of the Gospel, it is certainly one of them. The next chapter will explore the content of such a pastoral criterion for today.

# CHAPTER III

## SPELLING OUT A PASTORAL CRITERION FOR TODAY

It is essential that a theology useful for church proclamation be faithful to scripture and tradition--but this in itself is not enough. It must also meet the criterion of pastoral effectiveness. It must evidence a power to reach people--to communicate, intrigue, unsettle. It should not make the Christian message appear unintelligible or irrelevant. The *given Gospel* (enduring insight of neo-orthodoxy) must be proclaimed to the *given age* (enduring insight of liberalism). A religion deriving from the incarnation must have the courage to become incarnate itself.

So far the term *pastoral criterion*--or criterion of pastoral effectiveness--has been used in a general and somewhat vague way. There is a need to spell out more specifically the content of such a criterion for today. Fortunately, there is no need to begin *ex nihilo.* Several contemporary theologians and specialists in related areas have dealt incitefully with this question. A survey of their positions will prove helpful.

For the purposes of this paper, three of the most influential thinkers in this area will be examined: catechist-liturgist-theologian Josef Jungmann (1889-1975), Protestant systematic theologian Paul Tillich (1886-1965), and Roman Catholic systematic theologian Karl Rahner (1904- ).

## A. Josef Jungmann (1889-1975)

It might be expected that powerful moves towards a more "pastoral" theology would come from people involved in the "front lines" of church work--from liturgists, catechists and others dealing in the concrete specifics of trying to proclaim the Gospel. This is exactly where it did arise, finding an apt spokesman in catechist-liturgist-theologian Joseph A. Jungmann, S.J.

### The Catechetical Situation

Before the publication of Jungmann's classic Die Frohbotschaft und unsere Glaubensverkundigung[1] in 1936, the burgeoning catechetical movement had focused almost exclusively on the renewal of methods used for preaching and teaching. This way, of course, certainly not unneeded. The model for most Catholic catechisms from 1847 to that time (including the Baltimore Catechism of the American Bishops) was the theological outline of Josef Deharbe, S.J.[2]

Deharbe-inspired catechisms generally excelled in clear logical arrangement and conceptual clarity. (In this respect they were a useful balance to the vague, a-dogmatic moralism characteristic of most Age of usefulness of audio-visuals and classroom activities was also discovered. Particularly in Germany, France, Austria and Belgium, where the findings of applied psychology had already been applied to the teaching of secular subjects, there was an explosion of new approaches to religious instruction.

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[1] (Regensburg: Paslet, 1936). The more accessible, English version is entitled The Good News Yesterday and Today, trans. and ed. William A. Huesman, S.J. (New York and Chicago: W. H. Sadlier, Inc., 1962).

[2] For an interesting history of this catechism, cf. Jungmann's Handing on the Faith (New York: Herder & Herder, 1959), pp. 114-123.

This remarkable development in teaching techniques, itself praiseworthy, held a danger. Many catechists began believing the solution to all their problems lay only in acquainting themselves with advanced classroom methods. For a while, it seemed that the net result of the catechetical movement would be little more than a handful of new techniques.

It was not long, however, before the best leaders of modern catechetics warned teachers of a threefold danger. Johannes Hofinger summarizes it well.[6] First, there was a danger that method is seen no longer as a means, but as an end in itself. Method developed independently of both message and teacher will resort in distortion of the original intent. Second, there was a danger of developing such a multitude of methods and techniques that they are used improperly, not inter-coordinated—so that the message becomes more confused and fragmented than it had been already. Finally, teaching techniques suitable for profane subjects, used indiscriminately for catechisis and preaching, may be unsuitable for fostering inner growth.

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[6] The Art of Teaching Christian Doctrine (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1968), p. 3.

> Christianity such as this is not the Good News proclaimed by Christ.[8]

The current malaise is more than just another expression of the skeptical rationalism inherited from the 19th century--an outlook that inclines people to noncommittal relativism. Nor is it simply that scientific technology has rendered a naive faith in a God of natural forces untenable, pushing God farther and farther into abstraction. The problem is "an extensive misunderstanding or nonunderstanding of the Christian message."[9]

For many, the Christian proclamation comes out little more than an odd basketful of metaphysical definitions and distinctions, extraneous bits of etheral information to be mentally affirmed. The Christian message appears to have no core of unity, and above all no great enduring personal value. In the words of G. B. Guzzetti:

> The defect in content of knowledge among Catholics is not so distressing as their lack of persuasion that Christianity is of vital importance in their lives. Many can recite without a mistake the creed or the commandments, but they are unaware of the impact these truths should have on life. To them, Christianity is true in the same sense that Mt. Blanc is 15,781 feet high--it might just as well be 30 feet higher.[10]

How must the church meet this situation? How can it rekindle enthusiasm for the most important news of all - God's invitation to salvation? Does the answer lie in an increased instruction in apologetics? Apologetics may lead up to faith; it does not enter it.[11] Apologetics deals with particular questions. What is under attack in the present situation is not this or that specific item but the whole substance and significance of the Christian faith.

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[8] Josef Jungmann, S.J., The Good News Yesterday and Today, pp. 3-4.

[9] Ibid., p. 5.

[10] "The Theology of Preaching," Theology Digest I (May 1952), p. 2.

Would the problem be solved by a more solid and thorough instruction in the individual doctrines of the faith--like papal infallibility, indulgences, the Immaculate Conception, etc.? Contemporary Catholics have already received a more complete and conceptually precise instruction about the person of Christ, Mary, Adam and Eve, the sacraments, and so on, than did the average priest of the early church and well into the Middle Ages.[12] Yet, there is still no sense of unity or joy of response:

> All they retain of Christian doctrine is a string of dogmas and moral precepts, threats and promises, customs and rites, tasks and duties imposed on unfortunate Catholics, while the non-Catholics get off free of them.[13]

Mere rational assent to Christian doctrines is not the response of joy and love the Gospel originally elicited.

Is there perhaps some special doctrine of the early church that has become lost--a doctrine that was responsible for their joy and enthusiams, a doctrine we need to redisdover? This is a phantom. Nor is a proper solution to be found in a flight from the intellect towards the irrational, towards mysticism, towards vague religious good feelings with no particular content.

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[11] Josef Jungmann, S.J., op. cit., p. 5.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Idem., "Theology and Kerymatic Teaching," Luman Vitae 5 (April 1950), pp. 258-259.

It is not enough to demonstrate the reasonableness of the various doctrines. It is not enough to unpack every point of every belief or commandment down to the last division. What is lacking--and what is singularly essential to recapture--is "a vital understanding of the Christian message, bringing together the many into a consistent unified whole. . . ."[14] This age needs again to be introduced to the central substance of the Gospel, and its immense value for each person. And this main substance is Jesus Christ.

> All dogmatic treatises converge about Christ. His person and work form the true core of the Christian message of salvation. In this sense, Christ may rightly be called the center of all doctrine; in fact, of all theological disciplines. All of theology is, then, intrinsically Christocentric.[15]

Christianity, after all, is "not something to which one has to give assent, but someone whom we meet."[16] It is not in the first place pieces of doctrine but announcement of a fact--God's invitation in Jesus Christ. For Jungmann, Christianity is no other and no more than this.

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[14] Idem., The Good News Yesterday and Today, p. 6.

[15] Ibid., pp. 9-10.

[16] Idem., Announcing the Word of God, trans. Ronald Wells (New York: Herder and Herder, 1967), p. 66.

If the good news of God's love offered in Christ, the kerygma itself, forms the center of the church's preaching and teaching with all other doctrines converging on him and going out like rays from him then there will again be a possibility for joyous interest and enthusiastic response.

> It is our duty, then, to proclaim this sacred message as clearly and intelligibly as possible, developing it from its basic elements carrying it forward step by step, until the full image emerges and Christ shines forth as the luminous who illumes every question, every doctrine, every commandment.[17]

This Christ-centeredness is a consistent quality of the preaching and teaching found in the New Testament, particularly in St. Paul. It is a dominant quality of patristic preaching as well.

## Understanding How We Got Here

What caused the simple, Christ-centered Gospel kerygma of the early church to fragment so drastically? The complexification came as a result of pressures exerted by the rise of heresies.

> What led to the development of theology, and ultimately to Scholasticism, was the necessity of giving answers to questions, not so much to those about the plain demand of salvation, but rather to questions raised by captious, critical reason - questions which generally took the form of attacks by enemies. Thus, when Celsus directed the first systematic attack on Christianity from the side of pagan philosophy, Origen not only countered with an apology but also was the first to oppose it with a systematic presentation of Christian doctrine.[18]

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[17] Idem., The Good News Yesterday and Today, p. 11.

[18] Ibid., p. 38.

The Arian denial of Christ's divine nature furthered the breakdown of the basic, joy-producing kerygma. It occasioned such an eccelesiastical overstress of Christ's divinity that the idea of Christ as mediator between God and humanity was lost and a host of additional mediators became needed. Christ, himself, became the offended God to whom atonement had to be made.[19]

The polemics of the Protestant Reformation only served to increase the drive to define, dissect, examine in isolation every fine point of contention. A militant ruthless logic came to characterize much of Christian preaching and teaching, which now set forth all to offten not the essentials of the Gospel or the fundamental facts of Redemption, but controverted obscruities like the precise mode of the operation of grace in the sacraments, etc.

This fragmenting of the one into the many is visible in other areas besides theology. In church architecture the strong structural simplicity of the basilica, built around the altar, gives way to the extensive ornamentation and exploration of the superfluous in the Baroque.[20] Popular piety, which earlier had been concentrated on Christ our Savior living in our hearts, distributed itself over a vaster field - the earthly life of Jesus, Mary, and an increasing number of saints and angels.[21]

The prayer book also reflected all too clearly the picture of growing disunity. Instead of the classical Christian prayer directed to the Father through Christ in the Holy Spirit, there are prayers to God, to the Father, to Christ, to the Holy Spirit, to the Mother of God, to certain choirs of angels or to individual saints. Even in public worship, the communal celebration of the eucharist began to be superseded by the adoration of the host, and by a multitude of different devotions and novenas.[22]

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[19] Ibid., p. 60 and p. 45.

[20] Ibid., p. 52.

[21] Ibid., p. 43.

This dissolution of the simple graphic message of the Gospel into a complicated structure of concepts and distinctions was not without some positive results. The minute examination of various and sundry parts of the message resulted in a great amount of new knowledge. But it brought with it a new temptation, even in preaching the faith, to concentrate on a multitude of isolated pieces of knowledge, to exalt knowledge above its due, and so to obscure the true message concerning the facts of salvation-history. This temptation was not sufficiently resisted by the average preacher at the close of the Middle Ages, nor by the authors of the catechisms of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[23]

Our proclamation of the Gospel lost its cohesive unity and dynamic impact as it responded to the objections raised by various heresies. This intellectualist dissection and refinement of the integrated whole reached its high water mark in Scholasticism, many of whose assertions were uncritically preached from pulpits and printed in catechisms. The times may have called for such dissective theological examination--but this kind of theology was certainly not undertaken with a view to becoming substance for preaching. At any rate, the sword should have been returned to its scabbard after the squabbling was over so that the church could return to a simpler, fuller sharing of its message. Unfortunately, this did not prove to be the case.[24]

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[22] Ibid., p. 57 and p. 44.

[23] Idem., Announcing the Word of God, p. 28.

## A New Programme

It may have been possible in earlier times to live a rich Christian life without understanding the content of faith in terms of its radiant kerygmatic core. Entry into active Christian life could be achieved through some peripheral devotion or some disconnected but truly believed propositions. Such a phenomenon was possible and perhaps even the general case in times when the culture was thoroughly Christian, and faith was supported everywhere by the nourishing care of the church and her practices.[25]

But the situation today is quite different. Gone is the thoroughly Christian atmosphere of family and public life. The Christian religion is no longer commonly accepted as a great treasure. The Christian Church today faces not doubts about this or that particular of doctrine, but widespread disinterest in the message as a whole.[26] In short, we face world paganism and are in much the same position as the early church itself was.

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[24] Idem., The Good News Yesterday and Today, p. 35.

[25] Ibid., pp. 10-11.

[26] Ibid. As we will see later in the paper, Rahner makes a similar observation in his discussion of "diaspora."

It is no accident, therefore, that contemporary church architecture is returning to the basilica form, with its strong structural stress not on the superfluous and varied but on the central--the altar and the symbol of redemption.[27] This is architecture's response to the present situation. And our preaching and teaching should display the same kind of centeredness and proportion--kerygmatic Christocentricity.

This return to the Christocentricity of the church has already begun. There is a deepening historical interest in the ancient religious heritage of the early church. Biblical and pratristic studies are thriving and helping us refocus on the essential. There is a burgeoning movement towards liturgical renewal, guided by Pius X's watchword, "instaraurare omnia in Christo." There is the catechetical movement, trying to put the spirit of Jesus Christ alive back into the anemic structures of past religious instruction. Encouraging this whole movement towards Christocentricity has also been the constant good example of the church year, the basic course in religion for everyone. From the very beginning it has drawn our prayerful attention to the two great focuses of Christmas and Easter, the incarnation and the redemption.[28]

Very much is to be gained from concentrating our preaching and teaching on the person of the Savior. First, people will develop a clearer and more vital understanding of the content of the faith. They transmission of "sacred learning." The meaning of Christianity is not knowledge but life, not theology but holy living.

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[27] Ibid., p. 152.

[28] Ibid., pp. 74-78; 83.

## A Separate Kerygmatic Theol[illegible]

Jungmann [illegible] dynamism of early Christian pr[illegible] joyous response it elicite[illegible] Rather, its power wa[illegible] ry core of the [illegible] Christ. By con[illegible] a collec[illegible] fragmen[illegible] and Christia[illegible] ere fragmente[illegible]

It i[illegible] affairs emerged. Scien[illegible] in response to various heresies. It[illegible] provide substance for general preaching but to meet the various objections raised by "captious reason." Much new truth was discovered through this intensive dissection of the Christian message. What was lost, however, was a sense of the one joyous kerygma. As the message became fragmented it became less comprehensible and less powerful.

> Sermon and catechesis, religious art and the organization of services ought to strive jointly to promote a consciousness of the faith upon which the liturgical and sacramental life may be based, and from which a joyful Christian faith can arise. This will be possible only when out of the many accretions of the centuries the single message, the kerygma of the holy Church, is once again allowed to emerge. To accomplish this Christ must be restored to the centre of the faith.[31]

Another important fruit of a deeper Christocentrism in the church's preaching and teaching will be a more obvious connection between doctrine and morals. Too often church commandments and precepts and ideals and guidelines seem completely extrinsic to the message. They appear an unrealted list of do's and don'ts with which Christians are saddled while those outside the church are left mercifully free. There is not much "Good News" in that! When Christ is again made the center of proclamation, it can be shown that imperative flows from the indicative.

> For right order consists in this, that we first understand Christianity to be a grace and accept it, and then remain conscious of the fact that we can maintain grace only through a struggle. The Moral battle we must wage is essentially a battle to defend this treasure.[32]

First, is the Good News itself, the Gospel invitation of Jesus—and then, the response, in joy and thanksgiving.

The integration of doctrine and morals around the person of Jesus is essential. The aim of preaching and teaching cannot, after all, be the transmission of "sacred learning." The meaning of Christianity is not knowledge but life, not theology but holy living.

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[31] Josef Jungmann, S.F., Handing on the Faith, trans. and rev. A. N. Fuerst (New York: Herder and Herder, 1955), p. 397.

[32] Idem., The Good News Yesterday and Today, p. 159.

## A Separate Kerygmatic Theology?

Jungmann convincingly asserted that the great dynamism of early Christian preaching, as attested by the enthusiastic and joyous response it elicited, is not due to any special method or technique. Rather, its power was due to its content. It centered itself around the very core of the Christian message--the Good News of our salvation through Christ. By contrast, the preaching and teaching of the present church was a collection of disconnected parts--each of them true, perhaps--but fragmented, showing no real power to motivate people to holiness and Christian life. Doctrines, spirituality, moral teaching--all were fragmented from each other and within themselves.

It is not difficult to understand how that state of affairs emerged. Scientific theology as we have it today arose in response to various heresies. Its original intent was not to provide substance for general preaching but to meet the various objections raised by "captious reason." Much new truth was discovered through this intensive dissection of the Christian message. What was lost, however, was a sense of the one joyous kerygma. As the message became fragmented it became less comprehensible and less powerful.

The work of scientific theology is necessary, asserts Jungmann, but it must be kept separate from the work of proclaiming the Gospel message. Theology and proclamation have different objects and different aims.

> Scientific theology is primarily at the service of knowledge; hence, it investigates religious reality to the outermost limits of the knowable (verum) and struggles here for the last little piece of trugh that can be grasped, without asking in each instance about the significance such effort may have for life.[33]

Scientific theology tends to separate its subject matter from the context of life and value. In a spirit of detached objectivity it wrestles precisely in those often peripheral areas where the light of revelation struggles with darkness, to mint all the treasure of God's word into conceptual coin. It aims at precise formulation, clear distinctions, total orthodoxy.

> The proclamation of the faith, on the other hand, is entirely orientated toward life. Hence it considers this same religious reality wholly under the aspect of how it is a motivating goal of our efforts (bonum). From the wide assortment of matter offered by theological analysis, all that is mere knowledge falls outside its purview and only that has significance which offers guidance and leads to the goal, which corresponds to the demands and requirements of salvation.[34]

The kerygmatic or proclamation-of-faith approach is anxious to develop not the deeper insights of the various parts, but an expanded sense of the beauty and goodness of the whole. It aims to present the value of the message, and the desirability of responding.

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[33] Ibid., p. 33. Cf. also pp. 31-32.

[34] Ibid.

Johannes Hofinger, S.J., a follower of Jungmann, offered a clever way to contrast the two approaches. The subject matter of them both is the same - Christian truth. Scientific theology approaches this subject matter with the tools of microscopic photography; proclamation theology with the tools of artistic photography.

Jungmann proposed that a "kerygmatic" theology be developed, with a method essentially different from that of scientific theology.[35] In its arrangement of material it would not be concerned with ontological orders of reality and metaphysical viewpoints. Its arrangement would rather be determined from the viewpoint of the human person. It would be psychological more than philosophical. It would begin not with God as He is in Himself, but Jesus Christ as He invites me to fuller life.

Jungmann's proposal sparked one of the liveliest debates of recent theology. Two of his Innsbruch colleagues, Franz Läkner and J. B. Lotz, tried to develop a theoretical basis for the separation of kerygmatic or preaching theology from scientific theology.[36] The goal of the latter would be Truth and its central object would be *Deus ratione Deitatis*. The object of preaching theology, on the other hand, would be the Good. Its central object would be Christ as the center of the order of salvation. It would address itself to heart and will as well as intellect.

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[35] Ibid., pp. 33-34.

[36] A good summary of their position may be found in Anselm Stolz's "De Theologia Kerygmatica," *Angelicum* 17 (1940), pp. 337-341, although with somewhat stilted evaluations.

Maintaining a clear theoretical distinction between the Good and the True eventually proved impossible. To construct one theology for life and another for analytical science is to create an epistemological disaster. What did develop, however, was a broad consensus that the theology of the schools had drifted too far from the central theme of the Christian message as a whole. It had not put at the service of the Christian community sacra doctrina of the quality called for by St. Thomas--formulations that would generate insight, prayer and action.[37]

The theology of the church must become more pastoral in orientation. As Karl Rahner and Herbert Vergrimmler wrote in their Theological Dictionary under "Kerygmatic Theology," "All theology must be saving theology. A purely theoretical, unengaged theology cannot and may not exist."[38] Michael Schmaus summed up the discussion well: "Scientific theology must also be suited for preaching or it runs the risk of losing its scientific character."[39] It must free itself of its lack of life by entering into history, into the history of salvation, into the historical Christ who died, rose, and was transfigured.

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[37] Yves M. J. Congar, "Bulletin de Theologie Dogmatique," Revue des Sciences Philosphiques et Theologiques (1951), pp. 593-594.

[38] Ed. and trans. Cornelius Ernst (London: Burns and Oates, 1968).

[39] Domenico Grasso, S.J., "The Good News and the Renewal of Theology," an essay found on pp. 201-210 of Josef Jungmann's The Good News Yesterday and Today, p. 205.

Jungmann, himself, was in agreement, writing in response to Schmaus:

> If theology is understood in this sense, then the aims implied in a "theology of the message" have actually been realized in their essentials, and it could be dispensed with altogether.[40]

## What Qualities Should a Theology Have to be Pastorally Useful? Jungmann's Input

In this chapter, an attempt is being made to spell out more specifically the contents of a pastoral criterion for theology. From this brief survey of Jungmann's positions, four basic elements emerge.

First, a pastoral theology must be historical. Theology whose object is some timeless verum is of no service for preaching. A kerygmatic theology is needed, whose object is the existential bonum for this given historical group of people. A good preaching theology must be a response to the needs of its time.

The main need of this time is obvious. Our disjointed, conceptual, heavily-didactic theology, perhaps adequate for an earlier age (when the Christian message came at one from all parts of the environment), is not sufficient now. There is today no dangerous lack of information about particulars; today there is instead a dangerous indifference to the Gospel as a whole. It is the Gospel _as a whole_ that needs to be communicated.

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[40] Handing on the Faith, p. 401

This communication of the Gospel as a whole can be achieved through the second element of a sound pastoral theology--_Christocentrism_. Christian preaching has lost its primitive power primarily because it has become lost in the various. Contemporary theology often appears a careful study of a hundred peripheral trees with no notion of the grand sweep of the forest. Although the attacks of captious reason may have necessitated attention to the diverse parts of the message, it is now time to return the sword to the scabbard. Theology must be gathered and interrelated once again around the central core of the Gospel, Jesus Christ our Savior. The various doctrines must be seen radiating from Him as spokes from the center of a wheel.

Third, a pastoral theology for today must be _anthropocentric_. Its proclamation must take the hearers into consideration. It must aim at being psychologically sound as well as dialectically correct. It must display a power to lead people to joyful response, instead of sending dry, metaphysical constructs over their heads and past their hearts.

Finally, a pastoral theology must be _mystagogic_. It is essential that the theology of our proclamation elicit more than mere notional assent, but thankful prayer and committed lives. The gap between theology and popular piety is a serious handicap for both. Life is to be lived as one.

## B. Paul Tillich (1886-1965)

A second major theologian to deal expressly with the question of a pastoral criterion for theology is Paul Tillich. Tillich is one of a very few modern theologians whose ideas have received a wider audience than simply among theologians and people of the cloth. Considerable powers of expression, openness to other scientific disciplines, and a willingness to deal honestly with contemporary issues have earned him a place in the secular bookstore.

### Formative Influences

"I am one of those," he writes, "who, in spite of the radicalism with which they have criticised the Nineteenth Century, often feel a longing for its stability, its liberalism, its unbroken cultural traditions."[1] Tillich writes that the nineteenth century is part of his life,[2] and the truth of this is apparent. With Schleiermacher and liberal protestantism, he thinks and questions from within the contemporary world, his stance basically apologetic. The world's questions are his questions. With Schelling, he retains a deep sense of the identity of God with the world. And with the German idealism he maintains a belief in the basic correspondence between thought and reality.

The nineteenth century's spirit of bourgeois optimism, however, Tillich could not retain. Just two years after ordination as a minister in the Lutheran Evangelical Church, Tillich volunteered to serve as a German army chaplain on the western front during World War I. After an initial exhilarating "overwhelming experience of a nation-wide community," he recognized that "the war would last indefinitely and ruin all Europe."[3] The colossal destruction of the war and its aftermath gave Tillich a lasting interest in politics and a profound sense of the tragic, the estranged that flavors so much of his work.

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[1] My Search for Absolutes (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1967), p. 24.

[2] Ibid., p. 23.

This period also gave Tillich an enduring suspicion of all false absolutes (whether political, philosophical, aesthetic or theological) and a deep desire to bring about the renewal of culture. In a sense, his theology as a whole is concerned with the theology of culture.

## Tillich and Barth

Tillich's basic stance in regard to the question of a pastoral criterion for theology first became visible in bold relief in a series of spirited debates with Karl Barth. These exchanges took place in 1922-23, in Theologische Blatter.[4] Barth's own response to the postwar collapse had been his famous Romerbrief, already considered earlier. The dissolution of German bourgeois society and values had convinced Barth that there was an infinite qualitive difference between the temporal and the eternal, between God and the world. God stands not with the world, but over against it. Nature is fallen so drastically that nature and grace are actually opposed. There is no essential correspondence between God and the world.

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[3] Ibid., pp. 38-39.

[4] For a more detailed account of this famous exchange; cf. David Hopper, Tillich: A Theological Portrait (Philadelphia and New York: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1968), pp. 35-64.

Theology therefore cannot begin with an analysis of human beings listening for a word from God. It must begin rather with the Word of God entering history and enabling people to hear. The human person and his questions can never be a starting point for Christian theology. It is not for man to question God. Rather, God questions man.

Tillich acknowledged the necessity and power of Barth's project. It _is_ essential to critique any liberalism that reduces Christianity to humanism.[5] But the dialectic cannot go on forever.

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[5] That Tillich is sincere in his appreciation of Barth's early work is clear from the below, written a decade later: "... the dialectical or, as it is now also called, the Neo-Reformed theology ... grew out of religious socialism and is extremely powerful. Its fundamental document is Karl Barth's _Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans_, a book of truly prophetic power and penetration. This theology lets the judgment of the unconditionedly transcendent God fall upon every attempt of culture or religion to claim value before him. In its conception the only relation which the world has to God is that the world stands in the divine negation, in the crisis, in the shaking of time by eternity. In consequence, mysticism and romanticism, idealism and the religious ideal of civilization are sharply rejected. Civilization may go on its own independent way, but it must be subjected as a whole of the highest importance for the religious situation of the present. _The Religious Situation_, first printed in 1932 (New York: Meridian Books, 1956), pp. 217-218.

All of Barth's "No's" must ultimately be anchored in some positive "Yes." Nature and grace must have something to do with each other. The world is not only under judgment but under grace. Tillich accused Barth (and Gogarten) of neglecting the positive (grace) which underlies the negative (judgment) in three areas: the relation of God to the world, God and Spirit, and God and history. Theology must speak "yes" as well as "no." What is needed is a theology of "positive paradox."[6]

Barth replied that Tillich made the relationship between God and the world, and God and history too direct, too unparadoxical. It looked like a hidden return to liberal theology's disastrous identification of the two, resulting in a cheap universalism of grace.

> I reject ... Tillich's grandiose generalizing, this setting up of relations between God and each and everything in heaven and earth, this broad universal sweep of faith and revelation ... as if it were self-evident that everywhere, judgment and grace hold sway, that everything, simply everything is involved in the struggle and peace of the positive paradox....[7]

In reply, Tillich reiterated his conviction that there was something more in the relation between God and the world than pure opposition. The result of Barth's reform theology is such a wide gap between the secular and the holy that cultural life ends up depthless and profane and religious life is reduced to empty fundamentalism. The Barthian dialectic, Tillich fears, has ended up a very undialectical supranaturalism that pronounces a simple "No" to the world.[8] Theology must certainly have something more meaningful to communicate to the contemporary world than that.

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[6] Cf. Carl Armbruster, S.J., The Vision of Paul Tillich (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1967), p. 107.

[7] Ibid., pp. 107-108.

In 1935, Tillich renewed his charge against Barth's "Dialectic Theology."[9] Barth's theology is not truly dialectic. It is a simple "No" to the world, a supranaturalism which makes the human and the divine mutually exclusive. Although the Barthian "No" was needed in its time to demolish the false claims of liberal theology--in particular the naive identification of God with the world, the divine with the human spirit, and the Kindgom of God with human activity -- the times call for a new effort. After all, "... an instrument that is a mighty weapon in warfare may be an inconvenient tool for use in the building trade."[10]

What is now necessary is an examination of the "Yes" theology can say. There _is_ some connectedness between God and the world. The question about the divine possibility is a human possibility. And, this is of great significance.

> "... no question could be asked about the divine possibility unless a divine answer, even if preliminary and scarcely intelligible, were not always already available. For in order to be able to ask about God, man must already have experienced God as the goal of a possible question.... Were an event only a foreign substance in history it could neither

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[8] Ibid.

[9] "What is Wrong with the 'Dialectic' Theology?," _The Journal of Religion_ 15 (April 1935), pp. 127-145.

[10] Ibid., p. 143.

> be absorbed by history nor could it continue to be operative in history. It is as far from right to call history purely God abandoned as to call it simply God's revelation.[11]

Although the "No" is an essential part of a truly dialectic theology, just as important is a "Yes"--a belief in the church fathers' doctrine of the Logos, which "has scattered its seed everywhere, giving answers and inspiring questions...."[12]

Tillich would later, in his Systematic Theology, outline an ontological understanding of this enduring relationship between God and the world. God is the infinite, being-itself. Man is finite being (i.e., a mixture of being and nonbeing). The fact that man has limited being (this is what existence means for Tillich) shows that he is not identical with being-itself. The fact that he *is* at all means he nevertheless participates in being. He is fallen, yet not fallen so completely he no longer participates in being.[13]

This participation in being binds man to his world, and man and world together to God, the ground of being. The interrelatedness of everything that is, participating in being-itself (God), is a rational structure Tillich calls *logos*. The universal logos which is expressed in the human mind can ask significant questions about God

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[11] Ibid., pp. 137-138.

[12] Ibid., p. 139.

[13] *Systematic Theology*, three volumes in one (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), Vol. I, pp. 186-192.

(and the Logos made concrete in Jesus as the Christ).[14] In fact, it is in virtue of this participation that revelation is possible.

## Religion and Culture

Some of Tillich's earliest work was to explore the relationship between religion and culture. This was the topic of his first published speech,[15] and a constant focus of interest.

> In spite of the fact that during most of my adult life I have been a teacher of Systematic Theology, the problem of religion and culture has always been in the center of my interest. Most of my writings—including the ... Systematic Theology-- try to define the way in which Christianity is related to secular culture.[16]

Religion, in its truest and most basic sense, must not be understood as a special function of man's spiritual life, but the dimension of depth in all its functions.[17] It is not a discrete compartment of human life, but points to that which is ultimate, infinite, unconditional in all compartments of life. It is the ultimate concern manifest in all creative functions of the human spirit.

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[14] The logos structure is, of course, universally present, but only man can become aware of it. He is microcosmos. "In him the world is present not only indirectly and unconsciously but directly and in a conscious encounter.... Actually man's participation always is limited. Potentially there are no limits he could not transcend...." Systematic Theology, Vol. I, p. 176.

[15] "Uber die Idee einter Theologie der Kulture," mentioned by Tillich in Theology of Culture (London, Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), p. v.

[16] Theology of Culture, p. v.

[17] Tillich gives a detailed account of his concept of Depth in "Depth," Christendom 9 (Summer 1944), pp. 317-325.

> It (religion, ultimate concern) is manifest in the moral sphere as the unconditional seriousness of the moral demand. Therefore, if someone rejects religion in the name of the moral function of the human spirit, he rejects religion in the name of religion. Ultimate concern is manifest in the realm of knowledge as the passionate longing for ultimate reality. Therefore, if anyone rejects religion in the name of the cognitive function of the human spirit, he rejects religion in the name of religion. Ultimate concern is manifest in the aesthetic function of the human spirit as the infinite desire to express ultimate meaning. Therefore, if anyone rejects religion in the name of the aesthetic function of the human spirit, he rejects religion in the name of religion. You cannot reject religion with ultimate seriousness, because ultimate seriousness, or the state of being ultimately concerned, is itself religion. Religion is the substance, the ground, and the depth of man's spiritual life.[18]

Culture--its art, its widsom, its moral demands--is the way a group responds to the object of its ultimate concern. Religion is the meaning-giving substance of culture, and culture is the totality of forms in which the ultimate concern of religion expresses itself. In Tillich's famous formula: "Religion is the substance of culture, culture is the form of religion."[19] For Tillich there is no compartmentalizing of life into the secular and the sacred. The sacred is the depth, the ultimate meaning of the secular.

> Religion opens up the depth of man's spiritual life which is usually covered by the dust of our daily life and the noise of our secular work. It gives us the experience of the Holy, of something which is untouchable, awe-inspiring, and ultimate meaning, the source of ultimate courage.[20]

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[18] Theology of Culture, p. 8.

[19] Ibid., p. 42.

[20] Ibid., p. 9.

Culture needs religion (a religion in true touch with the Unconditioned, the only object worthy of ultimate concern) to reform it, to put it in touch with its Ultimate Ground. And religion needs the creations of culture to express symbolically the Ultimate.[21] It is only through these symbols that the Ultimate can be communicated. These symbols, produced by the individual or collective unconscious, participate in the reality towards which they point. They open dimensions and elements of our own souls which correspond to the dimensions and elements of reality.

These symbols are not absolute themselves. They emerge unwilled consciously, and they die unwilled consciously when they no longer produce response. They may for a kairos time,[22] however, be apt vehicles for the communication of the Absolute. When they do communicate the Absolute, revelation occurs. The contents of faith grasp reason.[23] Finite reason is transcended but not destroyed. There results the experience of ecstasy--which is not a negation of reason but

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[21] Tillich gives a clear, concise essay on his understanding of symbol in "Symbols of Faith," Dynamics of Faith (New York: Harper and Row, 1957), pp. 41-48.

[22] Symbols, social movements, theological programmes come into their appropriate time (kairos) and then pass "... not everything is possible at every time, not everything is true at every time, nor is everything demanded at every moment." (The Protestant Era, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948). Tillich outlines his ideas on the subject in "Kairos," pp. 32-51 of The Protestant Era.

[23] Systematic Theology, Vol. 1, p. 53.

"the state of mind in which reason is beyond itself; that is, beyond its subject-object structure."[24] Religion says that revelation of mystery has occurred--not in the sense that its mysteriousness has disappeared but rather that it has become a matter of experience.[25]

## The Problematic Situation

Culture and religion are to be in positive relation to each other. Religion--ultimate concern--is what gives a culture meaning and depth. Christianity claims that the God manifest in Jesus the Christ is the proper object of ultimate and unconditional concern.[26] Culture should provide apt symbols to communicate this object of ultimate concern.

Yet, what Tillich saw was an alarming and growing gap between church and world, between religious assertions and contemporary experience, between theology and common language. Christian symbols seemed to be losing revelatory power. The Gospel was often preached without effect. The traditional language of theology no longer appeared serviceable. Many religious terms had acquired disfiguring connotations which robbed them of their original expressive power.

There is without doubt a genuine stumbling block to real faith in the Gospel, but the Church must not confound this difficulty by adding additional artificial obstacles by its unwillingness to use symbols that are communicative today. While there can be no question of communicating the Gospel so that others necessarily believe, we must find a way to put it before people so that a true decision for or against is at least possible.[27]

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[24] Ibid., p. 112.

[25] Ibid., p. 109.

[26] Theology of Culture, p. 40.

The main thrust of Tillich's theological effort may be seen as an attempt to render the Christian message intelligible to this modern age. In his own words:

> ... my whole theological work has been directed precisely to the interpretation of religious symbols in such a way that the secular man--and we are all secular--can understand and be moved by them. On this basis ... I believe it may be possible to reinterpret the great symbols of the past in a way that restores meaning to some of them.[28]

It is not enough simply to repeat the theological inheritance of the past. The doctrines of the Reformation that once split Europe asunder and aroused savage wars now produce little more than a yawn. They are little more than, to quote Schleiermacher's metaphor, great monuments showing that a might spirit was once there but is there no longer.[29]

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[27] "... there are two kinds of 'stumbling blocks.' One is genuine.... There is always a genuine decision against the Gospel for those for whom it is a stumbling block. But this decision should not be dependent on the wrong stumbling block; namely, the wrong way of our communication of the Gospel--our inability to communicate. What we have to do is to overcome the wrong stumbling block in order to bring face to face with the right stumbling block and enable them to make a genuine decision." Theology of Culture, p. 213.

[28] Ultimate Concern: Tillich in Dialogue, ed. D. Mackenzie Brown (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), pp. 88-89.

[29] Cited by James L. Adams, Paul Tillich's Philosophy of Culture, Science and Religion (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), p. 19.

It is not sufficient merely to parrot passage and ideas even from scripture itself.

> The ecclesiastical, and to a great extent the biblical, terminology is removed from the reality of our historical situation. If it is used, nevertheless, with that attitude of priestly arrogance which repeats the biblical word and leaves it to the listeners to be grasped by it or not, it certainly ceases to be the "Word of God" and is rightly ignored by Protestant People.[30]

The Word of God, after all, is any reality by means of which the Eternal breaks into time, grasping one unconditionally. It is always addressed to a person in his concrete situation, in his historical reality. If I am asked to leap out of my here-and-now into some situation of the past, even a biblical one, "what I receive is no longer revelation _for me_, but a report about revelations received by others."[31] No biblical word is the Word of God for me as long as I have to give up my historical reality to understand it.

If the Christian Church's traditional theological and liturgical language--and even biblical language itself--is today without power for communicating the Christian message, what is to be done? The worse possible response is to ignore the problem, dismissing the lack of our success in proclamation with vague excuses about stumbling blocks or weak protestations of preserving the precious inheritance of the past. This will not close the gap between the Gospel and the world; it will only arouse the deeper hostility of the untouched world.

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[30] _The Protestant Era_, p. 81.

[31] Ibid.

Tillich accuses neo-orthodoxy of precisely this approach. By refusing to abandon classical terminology and by disregarding the concrete historical situation of contemporary culture, it ended up throwing its message at people like a rock. The Gospel inevitably become something foreign, accidental, unprepared for.

> (This method) can be called supranaturalistic, in that it takes the Christian message to be a sum of revealed truths which have fallen into the human situation like strange bodies from a strange world. No mediation to the human situation is possible. These truths themselves create a new situation before they can be received. Man must become something else than human in order to receive divinity.... (The same is true of) its valuation of the Bible as a book of supernatural "oracles" in which human receptivity is completely overlooked.[32]

When taken to its extreme, neo-orthodoxy is actually a form of idolatry. Idolatry is the "absolutizing of symbols of the Holy,"[33] be they ritual acts, holy objects or even holy doctrines. These symbols for the Holy must be seen as vehicles and bearers of the Unconditioned, but not unconditioned themselves. Human beings and all their creations exist under the law of history. Even religious symbols have their kairos moment and subsequent decline. Tillich writes movingly:

> Something very tragic tends to appen in all periods of man's spiritual life: truths, once deep and powerful, discovered by the great geniuses with profound suffering and incredible labor, become shallow and superficial when used in daily conversation. How can this happen? It can happen and it unavoidably happens, because there is no depth without the way to depth. Truth without the way to truth is dead; and if it is still used, in detachment, it contributes only to the surface of things.[34]

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[32] Systematic Theology, Vol. 1, pp. 64-65.

[33] Theology of Culture, p. 60.

[34] "Depth," Christendom 9 (Summer 1944), p. 319.

## The Protestant Principle

Fortunately, Protestantism has at its very heart a mechanism for coping with the crisis of symbols and language--the "Protestant Principle." The Protestant principle, Tillich explains, is the expression of the proper relationship between the Unconditioned and the conditioned, between the Holy and the signs and symbols pointing to it.[35] Only God is God. Every other reality, including man and his symbols, is drastically relativized.

The Protestant principle guards against the attempt of anything finite to take the place of God in one's thinking and acting. It protests the seeking of false securities exhibited when the artifacts of previous religious ages, no matter how brilliant, are made absolute. It is the prophetic judgment against religious pride and self-sufficiency.

This Protestant principle is unique to Christianity. In fact, it is Christianity's unique nature:

> Christianity is final only insofar as it has the power of criticising and transforming each of its historical manifestations; and just this power is the Protestant principle.[36]

The history of Protestantism has rightly been called the history of "iconoclasm." It was the Protestant principle that gave liberal theology the good conscience to approach Scripture with the critical method. It was the Protestant principle that enabled liberal theology to overcome the false dualism between nature and grace, culture and religion. It was the Protestant principle also which enabled the Neo-orthodox theologians to criticize the assumptions of liberal theology, asserting again that Scripture is Holy Scripture and that man in his very existence is estranged from God. And it is in the power of the Protestant principle that theology today must criticize the adequacy of the inheritance of the past, surrendering false securities and pushing forward to discover more effective ways to communicate the Reality beyond.[37]

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[35] The Protestant Era, p. 163.

[36] Ibid., p. xvii.

## Tillich's Theology: The Method of Correlation

The impulses already present in Tillich's sense of the relatedness between God and man, his dialogue with Barth, his reflections on the relation between religion and culture, and his affirmation of the Protestant principle become plainly visible in his theological method. We turn to that now.

> ... the task of theology is mediation, mediation between the eternal criterion of truth as it is manifest in the picture of Jesus as the Christ and the changing experiences of individuals and groups, their varying questions and their categories of perceiving reality. If the mediating task of theology is rejected, theology itself is rejected; for the term "theo-logy" implies, as such, a mediation; namely, between the mystery, which is *theos*, and the understanding, which is *logos*.[38]

An effective theological system satisfies two basic needs: "the statement of the truth of the Christian message and the interpretation of this truth for every new generation.[39] Unfortunately, most theological systems tend to stress one need and ignore the other. They either state the truth of the Christian message precisely but in a way unintelligible to contemporary man; or they accommodate so completely to the spirit of an age that they lose their unique message.

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[37] Ibid., pp. xxiii-xxv.

[38] Ibid., ix.

"Kerygmatic" theology emphasizes the independent, unchanging truth of the message over against the demands of the situation.[40] "Apologetic" theology stresses the importance of participating in the current situation and answering the questions it poses. The insights of both must be integrated into a working theo-logy. Otherwise, the message is either thrown at people like an unintelligible rock or becomes so adjusted to the contemporary ethos it dissolves. In other words, for Tillich kerygmatics and apologetics must not be considered divisions of theology, but characteristics of theology as a whole.[41]

Tillich offers his well-known "method of correlation" as a way to integrate these two characteristics of a good theology. He believes such a method provides a way in which "message and situation are related in such a way that neither of them are obliterated."[42] True systematic theology has always used this method, although more or less consciously;

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[39] Systematic Theology, Vol. 1, p. 8.

[40] It is important to note that Tillich uses this word in quite a different sense from Josef Jungmann, as we have seen.

[41] Systematic Theology, Vol. 1, pp. 6-8.

[42] Ibid., p. 8.

but the times demand that it now be used deliberately and outspokenly if the Christian Church is to proclaim the Gospel in today's situation effectively.[43]

The method of correlation "explains the contents of the Christian faith through existential questions and theological answers in mutual interdependence."[44] Two movements are involved--one philosophical and one theological. The philosophical task is to uncover the existential questions that emerge from the structures of human life. This can only be done by a deep participation in the present life situation of a culture. It entails an in-depth exposure to contemporary arts and sciences. It involves an acquaintance with educational, social, political and economic institutions and trends. The church must try to feel deeply the tensions and polarities, the stresses and ambiguities of a given age, penetrating to the religious (ultimate concern) questions that lie at its heart. The theological task, then, is to hold forth Christian symbols as the precise answers these existential questions reach for.[45]

Tillich insists that the real substance both of human questions and of theological answers is constant, but the precise form in which they are expressed may vary widely. People will always feel, for example, the anxiety of being finite - subject to fate, destiny and death. Their way of articulating this concern, however, will vary. Likewise, the answer to the questions implied in human existence will always be God, Jesus as the Christ and the Divine Spirit—but these answers must be expressed in forms that correlate closely with the forms of the questions if they are to be intelligible.

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[43] Ibid., p. 60.

[44] Ibid.

[45] Ibid., pp. 62-64.

Without this correspondence of form between asked question and preached message, the Christian Gospel will retain the appearance of something foreign and irrelevant. Communication will not happen. Tillich goes so far as to say that "although God in his abysmal nature is in no way dependent on man, God in his self-manifestation to man is dependent on the way man receives his manifestations.[46]

To some observers, Paul Tillich appears to make divine revelation subservient to human experience.[47] It gives philosophy control over theology. It seems to make God wait for man's questions. Yet, Tillich maintains that:

> Symbolically speaking, God answers man's questions, and under the impact of God's answers man asks them. Theology formulates the questions implied in human existence, and

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[46] Ibid., p. 61.

[47] Outspoken in this regard is Kenneth Hamilton, The System and the Gospel: A Critique of Paul Tillich (New York: Macmillan, 1963). He writes: "Granted that no theology can escape the influence of the contemporary climate of thought, it is still far from evident why 'situation' should dominate theology to such a degree that it is able to dictate the kind of theological statements that can be made." Op. cit., p. 89.

> theology formulates the answers implied in divine self-manifestation under the guidance of the questions implied in human existence. This is a circle which drives man to a point where question and answer are not separated.[48]

The answer evokes the question, and the question reaches out for the answer.

Basic to Tillich's method of correlation is the conviction that there is a basic correspondence between the real questions of any human situation and the answering Christian symbols. No situation is totally, irremediably estranged. Reason and faith are not enemies, but related as question to answer. "Reason is the presupposition of faith, and faith is the fulfillment of reason."[49]

## Sources of Theology's Answers

We have discussed the source of the existential questions. They emerge from our participation in the contemporary situation, by our willingness to feel its pains. The world's questions are our questions. What sources does theology draw upon in order to formulate its answers? Although Tillich considers the Bible ("the original document about the events on which Christianity is based") the basic source of systematic theology, he rejects the notion that the Bible is the only source of systematic theology.[50] Since the Bible is an event in church history, the theologian implicitly affirms the valuable input of this source, including the decisions of councils and popes. Since the biblical message could not and cannot be received without preparation for it in human religion and culture and language, these too are sources the theologian may draw on.[51]

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[48] Systematic Theology, Vol. 1, p. 61.

[49] Dynamics of Faith, p. 77.

Tillich has used all these sources in his reinterpretation of classical Christian symbols. He has used Freud's understanding of libido (the indefinite striving beyond any given satisfaction, to induce satisfaction beyond the given one), for instance, to explain the Christian term concupiscence, the nagging directedness of man to a definite Subject to which he needs to be related in love.[52] Depth psychology has helped Tillich recover the meaning of sin, "which had become entirely unintelligible by the identification sin with sins, and by the identification of sins with certain acts that are not conventional or not approvable."[53] A deeper understanding of sin, Tillich maintains, shows it as universal, tragic estrangement resulting from the anxieties of freedom and destiny, and the demonic structures that determine our consciousness and our decisions.[54] The symbol grace, too, can be given an exciting reinterpretation with the help of psychoanalysis, which tells us that forgiveness—the acceptance of the unacceptable—is necessary before genuine healing is possible.[55]

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[50] Systematic Theology, p. 34.

[51] Ibid., pp. 36-40.

[52] Theology of Culture, p. 57.

[53] Ibid., p. 123.

[54] Ibid., pp. 123-124.

## A Norm for Theology

Tillich's method of correlation consists of the articulation of the deep existential questions lying at the root of the human situation, and the juxta-position with them of the revealed answers contained in the Christian message. These theological answers may be derived from the Bible, church history, and the histories of human religions and cultures. But what norms are to govern these sources?

Church history demonstrates that different norms have been used at different times. In the early church the norms were the creed with the baptismal confession of Jesus as the Christ at its center, and the hierarchical teaching authority. In the early Greek church the norm was the liberation of finite man from death and error through the incarnation of Life and Truth. For the Roman church, it was salvation from guilt and disruption through the ongoing sacramental sacrifice of God-man. In Reformation Protestantism, the norms for theology were justification through faith and the authority of the Bible. For modern Protestantism, the norm was the picture of the historical (synoptic)

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[55] Ibid., p. 125.

Jesus, and for recent Protestantism, it has become the prophetic message of the Kingdom of God.[56]

The emergence and disappearance of norms is a process affected by many conscious decisions. On the whole, however, this process is largely unconscious, resulting from the encounter of the historically situated church with the Christian message. This will inevitably produce different results--different norms. A norm's appearance "is not the work of theological reflection but of the Spiritual life of the church...."[57]

These different norms, of course, do not exclude one another in content, but they do emphasize different dimensions of the message and represent different focuses. Since the norm is the product of the church encountering the message, and not the product of a theologian's private opinion, Tillich admits he cannot know at this time whether the norm he has chosen will prove appropriate.[58]

The norm Tillich chose to offer grew out of his reflections on the contemporary situation. What Tillich saw in all realms of life was "disruption, conflict, self-destruction, meaninglessness and despair." This state was expressed in the arts and in literature, in existential philosophy, in political cleavages of all sorts, and in the psychology of the unconscious. A question arises from all this: Is there a reality in which the self-estrangement of our existence is overcome? Is there a reality of reconciliation and reunion, of creativity, meaning and hope? Christianity answers that there is such a New Being, manifested in Jesus the Christ.[59]

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[56] Systematic Theology, pp. 47-48.

[57] Ibid., p. 48.

[58] Ibid.

A norm of theology that might be adequate for today's situation, therefore, and the one Tillich in fact chooses, is the New Being in Jesus as the Christ as our ultimate concern. Thus, for Tillich, even the norm of theology itself comes from a careful listening to the contemporary situation.

## What Qualities Should a Theology Have to be Pastorally Useful? Tillich's Input

In this chapter we are trying to unpack what qualities theology should have to be pastorally useful. For Tillich, the task of all true theology is mediation between the eternal truth of the Gospel and the changing forms of experience people have today. From this brief survey of his work, four qualities appear to characterize a theology that is truly pastoral.

First, it must be anthropocentric. It must not allow its religious affirmations to appear like intruding rocks from outer space, having no essential relationship with human life as it is lived now. It must begin with man and his questions (the philosophical task), convinced that man only asks these questions in the light of an already given divine answer.

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[59] Ibid., p. 49.

The real substance of both human question and religious answer remain constant because human beings and God have something basic to do with each other.

Second, a pastorally useful theology must be historical. It must consciously participate in contemporary culture. For although the real substance of ultimate human questions remains the same, the form in which the questions may be posed varies widely. Theology will accept the form of the question that the present historical situation poses, and answer back in that historical form. Theology will also make use of contemporary culture's symbols and terminologies as it gives its answers, knowing that at kairos times very different cultural creations can become apt vehicles for communicating the Absolute. It will never allow these symbols to be absolute themselves, however.

Third, a pastorally useful theology today will be Christocentric. Because people on a large scale experience their present situation in terms of disruption, conflict, self-destruction, meaninglessness, and despair in all realms of life, there is a great search for a reality in which self-estrangement is overcome, and creativity, meaning and hope can be found. Theology today must answer that such a "New Being" can be found in Jesus the Christ. From our personal and cultural situation, therefore, comes the need for a theology whose norm is "the New Being in Jesus as the Christ as our ultimate concern."

Finally, a pastorally useful theology must be mystagogic. Like all other religious symbols, theology itself exists to express and put us in touch with the ultimate. It is to point beyond itself. A good pastoral theology is a vehicle in which the contents of faith grasp reason, bringing it to ecstasy. Reason is not abolished but fulfilled. It is beyond itself, in the presence of the divine spirit.

## C. Karl Rahner (1904 -

The writings of Karl Rahner (sixteen large volumes of Theological Investigations alone, as well as numerous articles and books on spiritual, moral and pastoral topics) are impressive in terms of sheer volume. Even more impressive, however, is the consistent unity of approach that pervades throughout, in spite of the large variety of topics treated. Without doubt, Karl Rahner has been the most influential Catholic theologian of the last three decades. George Lindbeck, a non-Catholic observer at the Second Vatican Council, has called Rahner "a man who in comprehensiveness and sheer intellectual quality can, alone among contemporary Catholics, be ranged alongside of Barth and Tillich, and who in terms of balance is perhaps the greatest of the three."[1]

### Formative Influences

Rahner has been heavily influenced by the work of two philosophers: Joseph Marechal, S.J., and Martin Heidegger. Marechal is generally considered to be the father of Transcendental Thomism.[2] He explored what grounds are necessary to make human knowing possible. Knowing can only take place, he held, because the human intellect has a dynamic orientation to realities outside. We have a natural drive to know. We come to know objects. To grasp an object as limited (which is what makes it an object), however, is implicity to affirm the existence of something beyond the limit. Human consciousness is, when examined to the limit, limitless. It is a dynamic orientation towards Absolute Reality. Its ultimate goal is the Infinite Absolute.

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[1] "The Thought of Karl Rahner, S.J.," Christianity and Crisis 25 (October 1965), p. 215.

[2] For a brief but excellent sketch of Marechal's work and its impact on Rahner; cf. Gerald A. McCool's "Introduction," A Rahner Reader, ed. Gerald A. McCool (New York: Seabury Press, 1975), pp. xiii-xvi.

Parallel in some ways to Marechal was Rahner's second mentor, Martin Heidegger.[3] At the University of Freiburg, Rahner was admitted to his famous seminar. Heidegger's starting point was a meditation on the consciousness of man as he raises the question of being. Being is what is knowable ("illuminated"). Every question one can ask is about the being of beings. Every question rises in response to the being of beings. The human subject is the locus in the world where being is luminous to itself. Man is the questioner whose fundamental question about being runs through the beings of this world in its pre-grasp of the world's horizon. Authenticity consists in choosing myself as this questionning subject. But whereas Heidegger believed this quest after Being ended in Finitude and Nothing, Rahner believes that the term of that dynamism is Infinite Existence, God.[4]

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[3] Rahner's doctoral dissertation, published in English as Spirit in the World (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968), is an attempt to engage the thought of Marechal and Heidegger in the context of Thomistic metaphysics. A brief examination of Heidegger's influence on Rahner may be found in Gerald A. McCool's "Introduction," A Rahner Reader, pp. xvi-xviii.

[4] Karl Rahner, Hearers of the Word, as cited on pp. 17-19 of The Rahner Reader. This translation, by Joseph Donceel, S.J., and otherwise unpublished, is generally considered superior to the translation of Hearers of the Word by Michael Richards (New York: Herder and Herder, 1969).

Just how influential Marechal and Heidegger have been on Rahner's thought will become apparent when we examine his theological anthropology, the controlling concept of his whole synthesis. Before turning there, however, it is important to examine one more influence on Rahner's thought--his pastoral work.[5]

Rahner began his career as a professor of theology in 1938, at the Jesuit Theological School in Innsbruck. Just a year later, however, the Nazis closed the school and ordered Rahner to leave the city. For the next five years, Rahner devoted himself to pastoral work and theological lecturing in the Archdiocese of Vienna. His personal experience of an urban diocese torn by war and his ministerial contact with large numbers of people struggling with faith during those dark times were to give him an enduring conviction that theology must be pastorally useful. It can never exist as ars gratia artis. "... theology does not exist as an end in itself, but ... rather to serve the Church, her preaching and then her teaching office as well."[6] All theology properly understood is "kerygmatic"--otherwise, it is merely speculative philosophy of religion. Speculative theology exists only to be a service to pastoral theology, the study of how the church is to realize its nature in a given historical situation.[7]

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[5] Cf. Gerald McCool's "Introduction," A Rahner Reader, p. xix.

[6] Karl Rahner, "Dialogue in the Church, " Theological Investigations, Vol. 10, trans. David Bourke (New York: Herder and Herder, 1973), p. 118.

[7] "Practical Theology within the Totality of Theological Disciplines," Theological Investigations, Vol. 9, trans. Graham Harrison (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972), pp. 106-107.

## Theological Anthropology

The unifying theoretical base of Rahner's work is his theological anthropology, largely influenced by Heidegger and Marechal. The main substance of his theology can be considered subtle elaborations of it.

Rahner's starting point is the observation that man is that entity which asks questions about the being of beings. The fact that he does ask implies that he has a certain foregrasp (Vorgriff) of being, since one can ask a question only in the light of a dimly perceived answer. The fact that man must ask the question of being means he is not simply speaking identical with being. The being that inquires about being is therefore both being and non-being.[8]

Proximate questions lead to more ultimate questions, until finally the question implicit in all questions comes to light-the question after being itself. After all, to grasp objects standing over against one as limited is to have a sense of the beyond of them. To be capable of this kind of total questionning implies that man is open to the whole horizon of being.[9] Man is unlimited transcendentality. He is quodammodo omnia. He asks a question, and he is a question, a seeking after being.

The absolute whether of human transcendence is God the Mystery--unlimited, unobjectifiable Being.[10] God and man have to do with each other. The experience of God (the Mystery) and the experience of the self (orientation to Mystery) constitute a unity.[11] There is an inherent relationship between theology and anthropology. Rahner remarks:

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[8] Hearers of the Word, included in A Rahner Reader, pp. 3-4, 11-12.

[9] Ibid., pp. 15-16, 20.

[10] Ibid., pp. 17-19.

> As soon as man is understood as the being who is absolutely transcendent in respect of God, 'anthropocentricity' and 'theocentricity' in theology are not opposites but strictly one and the same thing, seen from two sides. Neither of the two aspects can be comprehended at all without the other.[12]

Encountering his own radical questionableness, one can try to dodge and escape it. A person may attempt to live only on the surface of life, dealing with realities he can easily name and control. He may become distracted with bourgeois busyness and accumulation, or stifle his questionableness through unswerving devotion to some ideology or utopian future. The alternative, of course, is to accept the questionableness of human existence and to live bravely and trustfully in the face of it, activating the self in acts of self-transcendence. Rahner calls such a response faith, and claims that people who go on trusting and loving and caring are accepting God's grace, whether they are consciously aware of it or not.[13]

This absolute Mystery may choose to communicate itself in history. It is only through the sensible objects of history that man is capable of receptive knowledge.[14] Because of his constitution as orientation to this mystery, man always listens, hearing either God's word or His silence. God in fact has spoken His word in history--Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is God's total self-communication into man (who has a potency for all of being). He is also man's utter self-transcendence into God through the disposing of himself in trusting love.[15] The incarnation says a colossal thing about human nature. It possesses the potency for becoming the nature of God himself.

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[11] Cf. Karl Rahner, "Experience of Self and Experience of God," Theological Investigations, Vol. 13, trans. David Bourke (New York: Seabury Press, 1975), pp. 124-129.

[12] "Theology and Anthropology," Theological Investigations, Vol. 9, p. 28.

[13] "Atheism and Implicit Christianity," Theological Investigations, Vol. 9, pp. 145-147.

Creation is to be understood as the condition for this incarnation. It is graced from the beginning by virtue of its supernatural orientation. "Pure nature"--nature as ungraced--is a philosophical construct, not an existential reality.[16] Man, as that part of creation who has an unlimited openness to being, possesses a true "obediential potency," a "supernatural existential."

> Man is spirit; i.e., he lives his life while reaching unceasingly for the absolute, in openness towards God. And his openness towards God is not something which may happen or not happen to him once in awhile.... He is forever the infinite openness of the finite for God.[17]

For Rahner, human beings are by their natural makeup open to a possible communication of God in history. At our deepest level we are asking the question of being, unlimited Being. This does not, however, mean the Christian message can be communicated to the people of today any which way. We are in a unique situation with special demands.

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[14] Hearers of the Word, included in a Rahner Reader, p. 55.

[15] In "The Two Basic Types of Christology," Theological Investigations, Vol. 13, pp. 213-223, Rahner explores the "descending" and "ascending" approaches to Christology.

[16] Nature and Grace, trans. Dinah Wharton (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1963), pp. 126-127.

[17] Hearers of the Word, included in A Rahner Reader, p. 20.

## The Current Situation: Diaspora

In an earlier day, when one was already impregnated with Christianity as social custom and "ideology" before one was able to make a personal act of faith, it was perhaps possible to be unconcerned about the precise doctrinal mode of communication of Christianity. It was not so essential to differentiate the primary from the secondary, or to be cautious that the content of preaching be readily assimilable. People already had the gist of Christianity through osmosis, and could choose for or against.[18]

It is a different world today. The age of Christendom--when the assertions of the Christian religion were supported by institutional morality, custom, tradition, public opinion, conformism, etc.--is definitely gone. This is a time of non-Christian liberalism, humanism, militant atheism, and the atrophy of religion. Traditional Christianity is one movement among others--it no longer possesses a controlling cultural monopoly. Rahner calls this a "diaspora" situation.[19]

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[18] "The Need for a 'Short Formula' of Christian Faith," Theological Investigations, Vol. 9, pp. 117.

[19] An excellent treatment of "Diaspora" and its practical implications for church life and practice is contained in "The Christian and His World," Theological Investigations, Vol. 7, trans. David Bourke (New York: Herder and Herder, 1971), pp. 88-99.

Nowhere is the shift from Christendom to diaspora more clearly visible than in the case of seminarians beginning theological studies. Even a scant thirty years ago, the typical student came to his study of theology with a firm and generally unproblematic substance of faith. His family and his surroundings had provided him with a firm and homogeneous foundation even before he started his studies. He would typically approach his courses with "dialectical unconcern" and a "touching lightheartedness."

Today the typical seminarian suffers from a genuine felt poverty of faith. He has grown up in an absolutely pluralistic and generally nonsupportive (as regards Christianity) milieu. He no longer accepts the church's assertions as foregone conclusions. He has a threatened, attacked faith[20] and needs to return to basic questions. The change of situation so conspicuous in the seminary is a world-wide reality.

Although there are many who mourn the passing of Christendom and rise of secularism, Rahner is not one of them. For him, "there is never any period that can be called the Christian age, any culture which is the Christian culture...."[21] It is never possible simply to deduce, from Christian principles of belief and morality, any one single pattern of the world as it ought to be. We should consider that this diaspora situation has not merely been (unfortunately) permitted by God, but actually willed by him.[22] It is therefore not only a problem; it is an opportunity.

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[20] "Reflections on the Contemporary Intellectual Formation of Future Priests," Theological Investigations, Vol. 6, trans. Karl-H. and Boniface Kruger (New York: Seabury Press, 1974), pp. 118-119.

[21] The Christian Commitment, trans. Cecily Hastings (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1963), p. 7.

For a Christian who must live his Christianity among a large number of non-Christians, religion becomes no longer a matter of mere organic growth but of active choice. Each individual will have to achieve it afresh for himself. It will no longer be simply "a heritage from our fathers."[23] (Kierkegaard would certainly approve such a change of situation!). This is not totally bad:

> We cannot simply say in despair that we are losing more than we are gaining. It all depends on what we are losing and what we are gaining. One soul apostolically won from a milieu which has already reverted to paganism is worth more than three hung onto from the remnants of traditional Christianity .... only to be, themselves or their children, lost after all; because, not having passed through the crisis of this age in its acuteness, they are not immunized against its spirit and so will not, perhaps, stand fast, in the long run.[24]

## Responding to the Diaspora

There are two responses the church can make in the face of the diaspora situation. First, it can encapsulate itself in a ghetto and arm itself for defense. It can leave the rest of the world to the wrath of God, as if the world had nothing of value or significance to offer it. It can withdraw from intellectual, cultural and social exchange, have little to do with normal life, and assume the appearance of an esoteric and exclusive club.[25]

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[22] Ibid., pp. 7-8, 17.

[23] Ibid., p. 23.

[24] Ibid., p. 36.

This response is not without its appeal, especially to a certain type of deeply convinced, rather tense militant Catholic. Yet, this would be to fall back into the Old Testament. The Christian community is not called to be "a fire that warms only itself."

> It must not be a preserve for life's inadequates, or a rosary confraternity for harmless souls who can achieve nothing more than to be pious, and to make this piety of theirs their sole contribution.[26]

The world even as secularized still falls under God's grace. It is permeated by this grace and is in virtue of this far from being atheistic in any absolute sense, even though on the level of explicit and conscious reflection it misinterprets this.[27]

The second and authentic response of the church to the diaspora world is to proclaim to it the good news. This good news is to be shared not merely as an "indoctrination" from without, but an initiation into what is really going on within human experience already.[28] It must be presented as:

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[25] "The Christian in His World," Theological Investigations, Vol. 7, p. 95.

[26] Ibid.

[27] "Theological Reflections on the Problem of Securalization," Theological Investigations, Vol. 10, p. 319.

[28] Foundations of Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity, trans. William V. Dych (New York: Seabury Press, 1978), p. 17.

> ... the mystery of what is manifest and the manifest in what is mysterious, for in reality everyone encounters this in his personal experience of life, even though not everyone is able to recognize it....[29]

After all, human nature has been conditioned and permeated by God's prevenient grace offered in Jesus.

The first and primary task of contemporary theology is this: to ensure that the essential and primary statements of faith are preached in a form which is credible and acceptable to modern man.[30] The content of faith will always need to be translated anew if it is to remain even remotely intelligible to the hearers. The form must change if the meaning is to remain the same. Theology is forbidden merely to repeat the ancient formulas; it is commanded _to communicate_ the truth.

A look at much recent theology reveals a serious neglect of this task. There has been too much calm pursuing of obscure peripheral questions--historical, philological, textual issues of merely theoretical curiosity. Sometimes, Rahner says all this gives the appearance of "an alibi for dodging the more difficult task, which is how the old, eternally changeless message can be rethought...."[31] In this critical diaspora situation, theology no longer has "the time, the inclination or even the right" for such activities.

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[29] "The Christian in His World," _Theological Investigations_, Vol. 7, p. 96.

[30] "The Theology of the Future," _Theological Investigations_, Vol. 13, p. 42.

[31] Ibid., p. 40.

> In the unceasing life-and-death struggle within a secularized society it is inevitable that theology should be fully preoccupied with having to raise and answer ever afresh the ultimate questions of a personal decision for God, for Jesus Christ, and (of course in a very derived sense) for the Church.[32]

A deep pastoral concern must characterize any theology worthy of the name today.

> ... the strictest theology, that most passionately devoted to reality alone and ever on the alert for new questions, the most scientific theology, is itself in the long run the most kerygmatic. The fact that our textbooks are so little alive, serve proclamation and witness so little, is not due to their superabundance of scholastic and scientific theology but because they offer so little of it....
>
> Anything which is merely conserved, or which is merely handed down without a fresh, personal exertion beginning at the very sources of Revelation, rots as the manna did. And the longer living Tradition is interrupted by mere mechanical handing down, the more difficult it may become to restore contact again.[33]

What elements would characterize this pastorally useful theology Rahner says the church needs so urgently? His reflections on this question are scattered throughout his many writings, but can basically be reduced to four categories. A good contemporary kerygmatic theology must be historical, anthropocentric, Christocentric, and mystagogic. These will be considered separately.

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[32] Ibid.

[33] "The Prospects for Dogmatic Theology," Theological Investigations, Vol. 1, trans. Cornelius Ernst (Baltimore: Helicon Press, 1965), pp. 7 and 10-11.

## 1. Theology must be Historical

A scant forty years ago, Catholic theology appeared as a highly nuanced, subtle system closed in on itself. Any further developments within would occur according to already given laws, and constitute little more than further logical developments of given propositions.[34] This old "scholasticism of the schools" was an impressive mental work of art ... with no clear reference to life as people actually experienced it. In Rahner's words, "... dogmatic theology (was) very orthodox ... but ... not very vividly alive."[35] The unrest caused by the Council made it apparent just how out of gear with the historical situation the average theology had gotten.

In order to understand what he sees or hears, a human being must bring the given message into connection with what he already knows. Only by bringing the given into the context of his own self-understanding and the sum of his experience can he genuinely relate to it. And so,

> Theology is a theology that can be genuinely preached only to the extent that it succeeds in establishing contact with the total secular self-understanding which man has in a particular epoch, succeeds in engaging in conversation with it, in catching onto it, and in allowing itself to be enriched by it in its language and even more so in the very matter of theology itself.[36]

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[34] "Reflections on Methodology in Theology, " Theological Investigations, Vol. 11, trans. David Bourke (New York: Seabury Press, 1974), p. 71.

[35] "The Prospects for Dogmatic Theology," Theological Investigations, Vol. 1, p. 13.

[36] Foundations of Christian Faith, p. 8.

If the content of revelation is to be grasped and existentially appropriated by contemporary people, that content must be expressed in propositions which relate to the rest of their historical situation. A good pastoral theology must grow out of its own time and be expressed in the terminology of its own time. For theology exists to serve not mere theoretical curiosity but the salvation of concrete people here and now. Theology that is pastorally useful, therefore, will always have a strong historical flavor.

A complete, self-enclosed theological system is an absurdity because we are bound up unalterable in the flow of history.[37] The constant of theology--the self-revelation of God in Christ Jesus--is not in its essential form a matter of revealed propositions. It is rather a global experience[38] which may be articulated in any number of ways, depending on the types of questions raised by people in their particular historical situation.

There is no such thing as a "chemically pure" proposition or dogma. Even a dogma is of necessity conceived of by means of conceptual modes and in intellectual contexts deeply embedded in the flow of history. And when this dogma is "translated" into a modern conceptuality, it does not thereby become more historically conditioned (all theological statements are inevitably so), but only historically conditioned in a different and modern way. The question the theologian must ask is rather whether this particular expression of the truth is opportune, whether it can now find acceptance with the individual and contributes to the life of the church today.[39]

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[37] "The Historicity of Theology," Theological Investigations, Vol. 9, p. 73.

[38] "The Development of Dogma," Theological Investigations, Vol. 1, p. 65.

If the church's theological statements do not bear a modern imprint, this does not mean they are less time-determined or more universally-valid. It rather means that they are time-determined ... by the spirit of a bygone age. Unfortunately, this is a crippling characteristic of much church theology. Talk about original "sin," three "persons" in one God, the Word becoming flesh, is constantly becoming more obscure to the modern mentality.[40] Terminology that once produced definite and profound understandings in the hearers now remains opaque or downright misleading. Since not even the church can control the history of the development of the meaning of terms--even theological ones--theology must be willing to use the new secular terms, entrusting itself to the power of God's truth, which is beyond all words.[41]

Our place is in history, and we can only possess and be possessed by God's truth within it. It is not only the world's history, after all, but God's history as well. Therefore, there should be no room in Catholicism for a false "esotericism" which regards anything outside the control of the church as dangerous.

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[39] "Basic Observations on the Subject of Changeable and Unchangeable Factors in the Church," Theological Investigations, Vol. 14, trans. David Bourne (New York: Seabury Press, 1976), pp. 10-11.

[40] "The Second Vatican Council's Challenge to Theology," Theological Investigations, Vol. 9, p. 21.

[41] "Basic Observations on the Subject of Changeable and Unchangeable Factors in the Church," Theological Investigations, Vol. 14, p. 9.

Not only dogma but even scripture is, like any other human truth, characterized by historicity. The scriptural writers saw the truth from certain perspectives and viewpoints which are not and cannot be the only ones.[42] The great insights of both scripture and dogma are "as it were symbols and trophies of theological achievements of past centuries.[43] Yet, a healthy, pastoral theology has so much faith in the power of the truth that it is not afraid to forge new and contemporary concepts and images whereby to express it.

The church must consciously enter the stream of historicity. For its proclamation it must openly admit that it draws not only upon its own source of revelation but also upon an analysis of the contemporary situation which can only be provided by secular and very fallible tools. This, of course, means the door is open to all kinds of hazards--misjudgements, the mouthing of unscientific platitudes, embarrassing misreadings of situations.[44] Yet, the church must dare to enter into historicity and contemporary analysis because she wants to speak to people--and in history is where they are.

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[42] "Scripture and Theology," Theological Investigations, Vol. 6, p. 95.

[43] "The Prospects for Dogmatic Theology," Theological Investigations, Vol. 1, p. 5.

[44] "On the Theological Problems Entailed in a 'Pastoral Constitution'," Theological Investigations, Vol. 10, p. 308.

Those who cling stubbornly to the articulations of the past forget that any terminology, even the towering accomplishments of past councils, can never adequately express what they intend. Words always, especially in their communal use, bring out certain characteristics of the matter and leave others in the background.[45] Theology's words can never express the whole of a reality, and to imagine they ever could would be to lower the mystery of the infinite God to human finite understanding. In Rahner's words:

> ... anyone who proposes to regard these propositions of faith, because they are wholly true, as in themselves adequate to the matter in question; i.e., as exhaustive statements, would be falsely elevating human truth to God's simple and exhaustive knowledge of himself and of all that takes its origin from him.[46]

A theology that desires to be of genuine pastoral service to the church must have the courage to contradict and contest any absolutizing of previous formulations, no matter how correct they might be in themselves, if they are not sufficiently steeped in the language and conceptualities of the historical present to be intelligible to hearers. It must resolutely enter into the experience of contemporary people, conducting an open dialogue with them. In this way the church herself can learn, being led into ever deeper levels of her own truth as she expresses the Gospel in new words appropriate to the age and context God has given her.[47]

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[45] "What is a Dogmatic Statement?," Theological Investigations, Vol. 5, trans. Karl-H. Kruger (New York: Seabury Press, 1966), pp. 54-54.

[46] "The Development of Dogma," Theological Investigations, Vol. 1, p. 44.

A deeply historical theology today will be characterized by several features. First, it will be plural. All through the history of theology there have been different schools, and a lack of unity among theologians on many questions. Yet, they at least shared a common terminology, field of discourse, and context of philosophical presuppositions. They came from the "same world." Today, even within the Catholic church theologians no longer share the same scholastic background. There is no longer a single universally understood or accepted philosophy through which theologians can hold coherent discourse. As if the multiplication of philosophies were not enough, it is a matter of everyday observation that history, sociology and the natural sciences also furnish important self-interpretations of man. We are in a condition of "gnoseological consupiscence," in which an all-inclusive synthesis of these different understandings is no longer possible.[48]

Because of this multiplication of philosophies and self-interpretations, a single theology is no longer possible. A theology anxious to enter into history will allow itself to dissolve into this contemporary plurality as it reached out to people in a multiplicity of situations and possessing a multiplicity of self-understandings.[49]

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[47] "Dialogue in the Church," Theological Investigations, Vol. 10, p. 105.

[48] Cf. "Pluralism in Theology and the Unity of the Creed in the Church," Theological Investigations, Vol. 11, pp. 3-12, and Foundations of Christian Faith, pp. 7-8. Rahner believes, of course, that theoretically such a synthesis is possible. But limits of time, strength, intelligence and memory will make such a synthesis impossible in practice. Cf. "The Foundation of Belief," Theological Investigations, Vol. 16, trans. David Morland, O.S.B. (New York: Seabury Press, 1979), p. 7.

The old formularies of faith will remain normative, but in the sense that they have constantly to be translated into the here and now preaching situation. Common origin, common worship, common sacramental life will provide unity, but not common categories of theology or preaching.[50]

A second characteristic of a deeply historical theology will be what Rahner calls indirectness. The various dialogue partners and scientific methods available to theology have all undergone such development and expansion (knowlegde explosion) that it is literally impossible to acquaint oneself with all the literature involved. Indirect theology knows it can never resolve every material problem one can have on the way to faith. It therefore abandons any claim of permanent or universal validity for its products. Instead, it contents itself to achieve a justification of faith which will satisfy the demands of the individual conscience.[51] It will no longer deal with every possible question; it will deal with this congregation's questions. Rahner's insistence on the pastoral nature of theology is very visible here:

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[49] This pluralism of theologies will have important consequences for the exercise of the magisterium. In the future, it will hardly be in a position to arrive at any fresh positive expressions of doctrine. The necessary unity of theology to make such a statement generally intelligible will no longer be present. This is not necessarily a loss: "The relinquishment of a 'development of dogma' ... need not entail any impoverishment of the life of faith in the Church, or any ossification of her awareness of her own faith. This life of faith is simply concentrated all the more clearly upon the ultimately decisive points contained in the Christian faith, and in the contemporary intellectual situation in the world there is every occasion for this concentration. And these most central and most radical points in the content of the Christian faith will be considered, interpreted, and applied to the present by theologies which are, and which will continue to be, very different in character." "Pluralism in Theology and the Unity of the Creed in the Church," Theological Investigations, Vol. 11, p. 20.

[50] Opportunities for Faith, trans. Edward Quinn (New York: Seabury Press, 1974), pp. 79-80.

> ... a methodology of this kind (indirect) ... does not yet exist in Catholic theology, or at least ... it exists at the semi-conscious level in the sphere of apologetics. Moreover this apologetics is of such a kind that it undervalues itself, considering itself merely as an 'argmentatio ad hominem," and with an exaggerated modesty imagining that its achievements are less than those of the supposedly higher discipline of 'scientific' fundamental theology. In reality, however, such apologetics represents a more direct approach and achieves more than this fundamental theology.[52]

Lastly, theology that dares to become historical will be characterized by modesty. It will attempt to say not the last and final word but the first word, a word of assistance to people searching for the truth. It will continually be readjusting itself, retranslating itself in order to become more available to the people it hopes to serve. It will be deeply aware of the utter incommensurability of its own formulations and the truth to which it points,[53] yet this will not cause it discouragement. Complete clarity about the real mystery of human life is impossible to achieve in the constant flux of history, and the appearance of clarity is but proof that one has missed the truth and succombed to some facile rationalism. Theology will find its consolation in the conviction that "to be able to stammer about God is after all more important than to speak exactly about the world."[54]

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[51] "The old theology of faith always knew that for the rudes or the uneducated, coming to faith through an adequate reflection upon all of the intellectual grounds of credibility is not possible and is not necessary. So I would like to formulate the thesis that in today's situation all of us with all of our theological study are and remain unavoidably rudes in a certain sense, and that we ought to admit that...." Foundations of Christian Faith, p. 9.

[52] "Reflections on Methodology in Theology," Theological Investigations, Vol. 11, p. 76.

### 2. Theology must be Anthropocentric

In addition to being consciously, unashamedly historical, a theology useful today must be anthropocentric. People of former times viewed nature as something majestic and utterly dominating. There was no concept of a nature whose strict laws could be learned and applied to nature itself, controlling it and directing it.[55] God was thought of as a factor in this natural world--the highest and most perfect, but an element of the world nonetheless.[56] He worked miracles to remove disturbances in the machinery of the world. The rule of God and the rule of nature were experienced as a peculiar unity. In natural events, God spoke, and through natural events His pleasure or His anger became tangible.

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[53] Ibid., p. 113.

[54] "Science as a 'Confession'," Theological Investigations, Vol. 3, trans. Karl-H. and Boniface Kruger (New York: Seabury Press, 1967), p. 395.

[55] "The Man of Today and Religion," Theological Investigations, Vol. 6, p. 6.

[56] "The Experience of God Today," Theological Investigations, Vol. 11, pp. 160-161.

Today, all this has changed enormously. People today have entered into a stage of development that stresses their own power to plan and objectify nature for their ends. They stand in the realm of nature as in a quarry.

> Any romantic yearning for pure nature, for its numinous rule, its pristine beauty and fruitfulness, is and remains romanticism. For even where we protect nature--where we establish national parks and lay out lawns, guard against river pollution and try to prevent the extermination of whales--the nature which thus survives is once more a nature we have freely chosen not to destroy, one laid out by us, our garden and not nature in the raw. Even this nature, therefore, is no longer the one in which the ancients lived as part of the whole, but a nature made by us, artificial nature....[57]

It is no longer I who accommodate myself to nature; rather, I accommodate nature to myself. The world of nature has become Godless. What happens in it is no longer experienced, at least as immediately and directly, as the action of God. Miracles are no longer encountered every day. The miseries and calamities of the world are now felt not so much as a challenge to pour out prayers of entreaty to the Lord of nature, as a challenge to our own creativity as we try to domesticate nature and make it more productive.[58] This "European profaneness" of the world is of Christian origin.

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[57] "The Man of Today and Religion," Theological Investigations, Vol. 6, p. 6.

The human person sees himself today as truly a subject. He has undergone a Copernican revolution from cosmocentrism to anthropocentrism, not merely on a theoretical level but in practical life itself. The medium of the experience of God has therefore shifted too—from the world of nature to personal human experience.[59]

A theology useful today must also make this revolution from cosmocentrism to anthropocentrism. It must enter into a dialogue with contemporary man as he understands himself. This does not eliminate the theos character of theology. Anthropocentricity and theocentricity in theology are not opposed, but rather "one and the same thing, seen from two sides,"[60] when man is understood as that being which has absolute transcendence towards God. Coming in touch with God, then, will mean coming in touch with my own self.

> ... the personal history of the experience of God signifies, over and above itself, the personal history of the experience of the self. Of course, the point could equally well be formulated the other way around. The experience of self is the condition which makes it possible to experience God.[61]

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[58] Ibid., p. 11.

[59] "The Experience of God Today," Theological Investigations, Vol. 11, p. 162.

[60] "Theology and Anthropology," Theological Investigations, Vol. 9, p. 28.

[61] "Experience of God and Experience of Self," Theological Investigations, Vol. 13, p. 125.

An anthropocentric theology will not make grace and nature appear as two layers laid very carefully one on top of the other so that they interpenetrate as little as possible. Scripture, after all, describes God's presence as "life," "annointing," "comfort," "light." Nature is graced. People will take little interest in God and grace unless these can be shown to be present where man is most present to himself.[62]

A theology useful for preaching today must be anthropocentric. Its basic form will be anthropology. It must situate its affirmations about God and His activity firmly in the context of man's own personal existence.

### 3. Theology must be Christocentric

The detailed system of doctrine that has characterized the theology of the recent past is a serious liability. People today find the mystery of human existence itself--or rather (the same thing in other words) God, the context in which human existence takes place--so all-embracing that they cannot easily bring themselves to accept a multitude of additional mysteries. The incredibly developed systems of multiple, apparently unrelated mysteries appear esoteric and mythological. They "look very much like the complications of human reasoning which has tied itself up in knots."[63]

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[62] Nature and Grace, pp. 7-8.

[63] "The Concept of Mystery in Catholic Theology," Theological Investigations, Vol. 4, trans. Kevin Smyth (Baltimore: Helicon Press, 1966), p. 36.

Actually, Rahner affirms, all these "mysteries" are but secondary derivatives of the one Mystery that is God. Even the two mysteries of incarnation and grace "are simply the mysteriously radical form of the mystery which we have shown to be the primordial one...."[64] Theology for today has the task of showing that these multiple mysteries that strain modern credulity are but different aspects of the Mystery of the one self-communicating God.

In its real and living core, what the Christian faith proclaims is not a complicated mass of propositions but a rather simple affirmation.

> ... the Church, however detailed may be the system of doctrines in which its faith is expressed, in reality says very little. What it tells us is that there is an impenetrable mystery of the most real kind in our lives, namely God, and that this God is near to us; that the absolute self-communication of this God to us has been manifested in history in a manner which is irreversible and valid in Jesus and his fate.[65]

It is in Jesus that the nature of man (as an orientation to Mystery) is fully revealed and realized. The event of Jesus Christ is critical for any theological anthropology (and Rahner has already said that the primary form theology should take today is that of anthropology). Jesus Christ is the ground for our hope. As we make our way through life, fully aware that much is not under our control and that human self-transcendence may be a total unfolding towards God or a cruel illusion punctured by death, the death-resurrection of Jesus reveals the grace of God and grounds our courage to keep on believing.[66]

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[64] Ibid., p. 67.

[65] "Faith and Doctrine," Theological Investigations, Vol. 14, p. 44.

All theology must be centered on God's self-communication occurring in Jesus. Otherwise, there is a very real danger of not seeing the forest for the trees. This Christocentrism does not, however, mean a premature attempt by theology to leap ahead and profess Jesus Christ to the unbelieving world as the instant answer to all human problems. This would be a too narrowly Christological approach.[67] But, theology must begin its task today by affirming a basic understanding of the human subject (as seeker after being, a potential hearer of the Word) and the Mystery to which he is called in such a way that these will provide foundations for the intelligibility of the Christ event.[68] The event of Jesus Christ can then be proclaimed as the eschatological event of all history in which the world freely gives itself to God and in which God freely accepts the world in mercy and love.

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[66] "The Foundation of Belief," Theological Investigations, Vol. 16, pp. 13-17.

[67] Foundations of Christian Faith, p. 13.

[68] Cf. ibid., pp. 208-212. In this respect, Rahner sometimes uses terminology strikingly similar to Paul Tillich's: "Certainly one thing is quite clear: the man who has no questions hears no answers, even though of course the question stays more plainly in a man's awareness if the answer is also heard, for question and answer hang closely together. The more precise the question the more care and attention will be paid to grasping the answer. Similarly the answer given in revelation clarifies the question a man asks. If one is aware from the start of the complementary relationship existing between the anthropological starting point and the theological answer, then one should not permit any further attack on the proposed point of departure." "The Foundation of Belief," Theological Investigations, Vol. 16, p. 9.

## 4. Theology must be Mystagogic

Rahner once remarked dryly that most theology taught in the schools was undevotional, and most devotions were untheological.[69] As a result, both suffered.

Theology, as all other acts of the church, exists not for itself but to put people in touch with the Mystery towards which human transcendence is oriented. In the long run, theological statements will only be convincing to the extent that they bring people into vital contact with this God, who is beyond all comprehensive knowledge. "Every theological statement is only truly and authentically such at that point which man willingly suffers it to extend beyond his comprehension into the silent mystery of God."[70]

The theologian cannot agree with Wittgenstein that one ought to be silent concerning anything about which one cannot speak clearly. It is certainly more important to stammer about the Mystery than it is to speak clearly and conclusively about trivial things. The conceptual clarity characteristic of comprehensive knowledge is deficient compared to the ecstatic attainment of the incomprehensibility of God.[71] In fact, complete clarity in theology would be "nothing but proof that one had gone wide of the divine truth in favour of the easily understood error of a human rationalism."[72]

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[69] Theology for Renewal: Bishops, Priests, Laity, trans. Cecily Hastings and Richard Strachan (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1964), p. 142.

[70] "Reflections on Methodology," Theological Investigations, Vol. 11, p. 103.

Good theological discourse does not only speak about the Mystery. Theology only treats properly of the Mystery if it itself is also a sort of instruction or introduction into the Mystery. It should function as a sort of "mystagogica" leading people to the experience of grace. It should aim to arouse and inform not only _fides quae_ but _fides qua_. Everything that is expressed in objective concepts must have a reference to the interior actual self-communication of God to every person.[73]

In this age of diaspora, when Christian living will no longer be sustained and promoted by the unanimous public convictions of society, the real Christian will need to be a mystic.[74] He will need not only to know conceptually about the Mystery; he will need to be in experiential touch with it. Theology must help people on their way to faith.

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[71] Ibid., p. 104.

[72] "Science as a 'Confession'?," _Theological Investigations,_ Vol. 3, p. 395.

[73] Cf. "What is a Dogmatic Statement?," _Theological Investigations_, Vol. 5, p. 60; and "The Theology of the Future," _Theological Investigations_, Vol. 13, pp. 40-41.

[74] "Christian Living Formerly and Today," _Theological Investigations_, Vol. 7, p. 15.

In the last analysis, theological words are spoken only so that one may arrive at that authentic silence which is prayer.[75] A theology pastorally useful today must be mystagogic.

## What Qualities should a Theology have to be Pastorally Useful? Rahner's Input

Rahner believes that all theology should be pastorally useful. If it does not have a genuinely kerygmatic (useful for proclamation) character, it is not true theology but philosophy of religion. Theology must always be at the service of the church.

Although we have just examined in detail what qualities Rahner believes should characterize such a theology, a brief summary might be in order. First, Rahner believes that today's theology should have a deeply historical character. Man and his creations are inextricably caught up in the flow of history. There is no such thing as a theology that is not historically conditioned, no such thing as "chemically pure doctrine." To cling to the theology of the past is not to opt for a nonhistorically conditioned theology; it is to opt for a theology that is historically conditioned by a past situation. Theology today must have the nerve to enter consciously and wholeheartedly into today's secular culture with its special questions and terminology. Only by doing such can it become relatable to the rest of man's self-understanding and therefore intelligible. In addition, theology must openly acknowledge its dependence on contemporary culture and sciences as it tries to identify the needs of the situation.

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[75] "Reflections on Methodology," Theological Investigations, Vol. 11, pp. 111-112.

Several consequences flow from this commitment to enter the current historical situation. Because ours is a time of gnoseological concupiscence whose multiple self-understandings can never be truly synthesized, theology itself must have the courage to dissolve into the plural. Such an historical theology will also be indirect. It will be so aware of the impossibility of answering every possible material question involved in making the decision of faith, that it will content itself instead with answering those questions that immediately touch people. It will have a certain _ad hominem_ flavor. A deeply historical theology will also be very modest. It will not claim to speak the final word but rather the first word, encouraging people on their way to faith.

Second, a pastorally useful theology for today will have to be _anthropocentric_. The cosmocentric view of the past is gone. Nature is no longer viewed as something majestic, awesome, revelatory of God. It is rather the raw material for human projects. The center of experienced reality is not the world, standing over and above me. The center of experienced reality is the human subject, who views the world as fit matter for his creativity. Accordingly, theological affirmations must be made on the basis of modern man's experience of himself as a subject. They will be anthropocentric rather than cosmocentric.

Third, a pastorally useful theology must be Christocentric. Theology must immediately correct the mistaken impression that the message of Christianity is something incredibly complex and esoteric, if not mythological. The various doctrines and mysteries must be shown as but expressions of the one primordial Mystery, the mystery of God communicating Himself in love in Jesus Christ. A truly Christocentric theology need not necessarily leap forward to affirmations about Jesus Christ as the first and immediate answer to every human question, however. Such a theology might begin by meditating on the human subject as someone who seeks after Being and waits to hear its Word. Only then might it go on to profess Jesus Christ as this event in which God freely gives Himself to the world and in which the world freely gives itself to God and is accepted in mercy and love.

Finally, theology today must be *mystagogic*. If diaspora believers are to remain believers, they will need to be mystics, people who can point to experiences that validate their faith. Good theology attempts not only to state conceptually valid things about God, but to put people in vital touch with Him. It must aim to arouse not only *fides quae* but *fides qua*. In the last analysis, theological words are spoken only so that one may arrive at that authentic silence which is prayer.

## D. Spelling Out a Pastoral Criterion for Today: Conclusion

It is clear that not just any theology is useful for church preaching. One criterion a candidate theology must meet is that of pastoral usefulness. What are elements of such a criterion? What characteristics should a theology have to be pastorally useful today? This chapter attempts to answer that question.

Fortunately, there was no need to begin *ex nihilo*. Several theologians have dealt specifically with the problem. Three of the most influential were chosen to survey: catechist-liturgist-theologian Josef Jungmann, Protestant systematic theologian Paul Tillich, and Catholic systematic theologian Karl Rahner.

What emerged from the survey has been a rather impressive consensus among them. While it is true that these thinkers reached their conclusions from different viewpoints and that their conclusions have different colorations and stresses, their mutual agreement is something more than merely formal or artificial or forced. Although the same terms are sometimes used by them with different nuances, there is a true convergence of opinion among them.

The first characteristic of a pastorally useful theology is that it be *historical*.

> Jungmann: Theology whose object is some timeless *verum* is of no service to preaching. A kerygmatic theology is needed, whose object is the existential *bomun* of this historical

audience. A good preaching theology must be a response to the needs of the time.

Tillich: Although the substance of ultimate human questions and theological answers remains a constant, the historical forms in which these questions emerge varies widely. Theology must accept the current historical shape that these ultimate questions take, and answer in kind. There is nothing absolute about any historical form of question and answer inherited from the past, no matter how powerful it may once have been. Contemporary culture, with its symbols and terminology, must be permitted to form its own question. It is also from contemporary symbols and terminology that theology phrases its answers.

Rahner: Theology has no choice but to be historical; man and his works are inevitably historically conditioned. To cling stubbornly to the classical theologies of the past is not to opt for an a-historical theology but to opt for one that has been historically conditioned ... by the spirit of a past age. A pastorally useful theology today (and all theology is called to be pastorally useful) should be self-consciously historical, entering deeply into the lives and concerns and joys and sufferings of the age in which it finds itself. It will enter the contemporary historical situation because it wants to communicate with people, and that is where they are to be found.

The second characteristic of a pastorally useful theology is that it be anthropocentric.

Jungmann: A pastorally useful theology must take its hearers into consideration. It must aim at being psychologically sound as well as dialectically correct. It must display a power to lead people to joyful response, instead of sending dry metaphysical constructs over their heads and past their hearts.

Tillich: Theology must not allow its religious affirmation to take on the appearance of intruding rocks from outer space, having no extrinsic relationship with human life. It must begin with man and his questions, convinced that man only asks these ultimate questions in the light of already given answer. Theological answers not matched with genuinely asked human questions will appear unintelligible and irrelevant.

Rahner: The cosmocentrism of the past is gone. Nature is no longer experienced as awesome, holy, revelatory of God. It is experienced as the raw stuff for human creativity. It is no longer man that accommodates himself to the world, rather it is man who accommates the world to himself. Man experiences himself as subject. In this anthropocentric situation, theology itself will become anthropocentric, grounding itself in human self-experience. Anthropocentricity and theocentricity are not opposed, but opposite sides of the same reality, once man is understood as that being who has absolute transcendence to God.

The third characteristic of a pastorally useful theology is that it be *Christocentric*.

Jungmann: Today there appears to be a dangerous indifference to the Gospel as a whole. There is no lack of information about various individual doctrines; theology has been minutely examining the fine particulars of the message, especially the controverted ones, since the days of the great controversies. What is lacking today, however, is a vital sense of the Gospel message *as a whole*, a vital understanding of the kerygmatic core. Christian preaching has lost its power because it has become lost in the various. The times call for a return once again to the central part of the message, Christ our Savior. The heart of Christianity is, after all, not a string of concepts but a person.

Tillich: People on a large scale experience their present situation in terms of "disruption, conflict, self-destruction, meaninglessness and despair in all realms of life." There is a search for some reality in which self-estrangement can be overcome; and creativity, meaning and hope grounded. Theology today must answer that such a "New Being" can be found in Jesus the Christ. The norm of theology today should be "the New Being in Jesus as the Christ as our ultimate concern."

Rahner: Too often theology communicates the mistaken notion that the Christian message is obscure, internally unrelated in its parts, and esoteric if not mythological. A good pastoral theology today will show how the "mysteries" of Christianity are but statements from different perspectives of the one primordial Mystery, God communicating Himself in Jesus Christ and His fate. Foundational theology will make its statements about human nature and its potential only in order that our proclamation of Jesus Christ may become intelligible to the people of today.

The final characteristic of a pastorally useful theology is that it be mystagogical.

Jungmann: It is essential that the theology of our proclamation elicit more than mere notional assent; it should evoke thankful prayer and committed lives. The gap between theology and popular piety is a serious handicap for both. Life is to be lived as one.

Tillich: Like all other religious symbols, theology itself exists to express and put us in touch with the ultimate. It is to point beyond itself. Revelation means not that mystery has been explained but that it has become a matter of experience. Theology is hopefully a vehicle in which the contents of faith grasp reason, bringing it to ecstasy. Reason is not abolished but fulfilled. It is beyond itself, in the presence of the divine spirit.

Rahner: A good theology for people living in today's diaspora will attempt not only to make conceptually valid statements about God, but to put people in vital touch with Him. It must aim to arouse not only *fides quae* but *fides qua*. In the last analysis, theological words are spoken only so that one may arrive at that authentic silence which is prayer.

Our search for the contents of a pastoral criterion, then, has produced some results. A good contemporary pastoral theology will need to be historical, anthropocentric, Christocentric, and mystagogic. These qualities are admittedly used by our authors with different nuances and occasionally the terms, themselves, seem to impinge on each other. They nevertheless provide four different perspectives from which to judge a theology's pastoral usefulness.

# CHAPTER IV

## KIERKEGAARD'S THEOLOGY APPEARS TO MEET TODAY'S PASTORAL CRITERION

The search for a pastorally useful theology through which to make its proclamation is a perennial task of the church. Among the many possible candidates, the theology of Soren Kierkegaard certainly deserves careful consideration.

Almost totally ignored by his contemporaries--or scorned as a dangerous fanatic--Kierkegaard remained in obscurity until more than two decades after his death in 1855. At that time a famous Danish literary critic, Georg Brandes, rediscovered him and he began to be read in Scandinavia and Germany.[1] Near the turn of the century his complete works were translated into German, providing powerful impetus to the rise of existentialism.

Interest in Kierkegaard's work has increased dramatically in the English-speaking world since the second World War. Before the war, not a single major work of his had been translated into English. By 1951, all his major works had become available. There has been a literal explosion of Kierkegaardian scholarship, not only in the areas of philosophy and theology, but also in the fields of music, poetry, psychology, social theory, communication arts, etc. A recently published bibliography of this scholarship[2] is 430 pages long! What Kierkegaard has to say is clearly resonating with many people.

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[1] Robert Bretall, "Introduction" to A Kierkegaard Anthology (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1951), p. xviii.

Is the theology of Kierkegaard useful for church preaching today? This chapter will attempt a preliminary answer to that question, using as its points of inquiry the four constitutive qualities of the pastoral criterion: A theology useful today must be historical, anthropocentric, Christocentric and mystagogical.

## A. Is Kierkegaard's Theology Historical (in vital contact with contemporary questions)?

Much of Kierkegaard's work can be understood in terms of three basic criticisms he made of his times.

1. Exaggerated respect for thinking has supplanted choosing.
2. As a result, the individual has become devaluated and made subject to the tyranny of the public.
3. Christianity itself has become trivialized by Christendom's objectifying tendencies.

These criticisms will be considered separately to see if they remain items of contemporary concern.

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[2] Soren Kierkegaard and His Critics: An International Bibliography of Criticism, compiled by Francois H. LaPointe (London and Wesport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1980).

## Exaggerated Respect for Thinking has Supplanted Choosing

Kierkegaard displays throughout his work an exceptional dialectical acumen. His gift of thought was developed to an astonishing degree. And yet he was quite insistent that thought cannot deliver what is most important. It cannot tell me *how I am to live, what I am to do*. Thought may be very good at comprehending the universal and the necessary, but it cannot grasp the concrete individual. It can deal with the past; it cannot deal with the present and future.

> It is quite true what Philosophy says: that Life must be understood backwards. But that makes one forget the other saying: that it must be lived forwards. The more one ponders this, the more it comes to mean that life in the temporal existence never becomes quite intelligible, precisely because at no moment can I find complete quiet to take the backward-looking position.[3]

In order to live as a human being, one must go beyond thought--one must choose. It is by the exercise of will that one develops inwardness, subjectivity, selfhood. People trying to live exclusively by thought wait so long for things to get clear, for all the evidence to arrive, that they never quite get around to living. They make no choices, move decisively in no directions. Contemplation takes the place of ethics. Life becomes no more than a process of acquiring more and more information.

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[3] *The Diary of Soren Kierkegaard*, edited by Peter P. Rohde and translated by Gerda M. Andersen (New York: Philosophical Library, Inc., 1960), p. 111.

> The majority of men in every generation, even those who, it is described, devote themselves to thinking dons and the like, live and die under the impression that life is simply a matter of understanding more and more, and that if it were granted to them to live longer, that life would continue to be one long continuous growth in understanding. How many of them ever experience the maturity of discovering that there comes a critical moment where everything is reversed, after which the point becomes to understand more and more that there is something which cannot be understood.[4]

Kierkegaard berated his own age as essentially "one of understanding and reflection, momentarily bursting into enthusiasm, and shrewdly relapsing into repose."[5] People seemed bent on little more than the consumption of massive amounts of information. It is almost impossible to commit suicide anymore, he jibes. By the time you finish examining all the pros and cons, you have almost thought yourself to death already! There is not even enough passion around for a good heresy.

When the power to make decisions is surrendered, when one succumbs to the "coils and seductive uncertainty of reflection," life becomes trivial. Everything turns into a joke, and the one who throws himself decisively into some commitment is considered a fool.[6] Detachment is considered the ideal.

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[4] Ibid., p. 172.

[5] The Present Age, translated by Alexander Dru (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), p. 33.

[6] Ibid., pp. 34, 39, 50-51.

> That is more or less where we stand now. Reason is everywhere: instead of love - a marriage de convenance, instead of unconditional obedience - obedience as a result of reassigning, instead of faith - reasonable knowledge, instead of confidence - guarantees, instead of daring - probability, clever calculation, instead of action - events, instead of "the individual" - several people, instead of personality - impersonal objectivity, etc.[7]

In such an age, there is no such thing as personal character ("that which is engraved") because character requires inwardness, and inwardness comes from serious choosing.

With no exercise of passionate choice, no commitments, all human relationships become banalized. We all turn into a great amorphous committee.

> ... in the end the whole age becomes a committee. A father no longer curses his son in anger, using all his parental authority, nor does a son defy his father, a conflict which might end in the inwardness of forgiveness; on the contrary, their relationship is irreproachable, for it is really in process of ceasing to exist, since they are no longer related to one another within the relationship; in fact, it has become a problem in which the two partners observe each other as in a game, instead of having any relation to each other, and they note down each other's remarks instead of showing a firm devotion.[8]

To abdicate serious choosing--making commitments--results in inner degradation and impoverishment. This is the accusation Kierkegaard levels at his age.

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[7] The Journals of Kierkegaard, translated and edited by Alexander Dru (New York: Harper and Row, 1959), p. 219.

[8] The Present Age, pp. 44-45.

## Modern Perspective

Any knowledge explosion Kierkegaard witnessed in his time is massively eclipsed by the knowledge explosion of our own day. In Future Shock, Alvin Toffler documents exponential increases in new publications over the last decades, adding that the spread of the computer will greatly increase the acceleration of information.[9]

This increase of information, with the prolonged years of institutional schooling that it has promoted, contributes directly to a contemporary ethos of indecision, nonchoice, and noncommitment, according to John C. Haughey.[10] The growing size and complexity of our other institutions lends a further air of futility. In addition, the findings of Darwin and Freud had focused so much attention on the conditioned nature of the will (viewing it more as determined than determining) that the Victorian era's "Where there's a will there's a way" has dissolved into "There's no will."[11]

Serious acts of will--commitments--are not attractive to the prevailing mood. Haughey sees a number of assumptions implicit in the modern outlook:

1. If one would preserve one's freedom, let him fight shy of committing himself.
2. The greater the number of options a person has, the greater the freedom he enjoys.

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[9] (New York: Random House, 1970), pp. 30-32.

[10] Should Anyone Say Forever? (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1975), p. 27ff.

[11] Ibid.

3. All a person must do to increase his freedom is to augment his capacity for having his own way.
4. Freedom is the capacity for indefinite revision, the ability to be always doing something different.
5. Since freedom and commitment are incompatible in this life, we must settle for one or the other.[12]

Kierkegaard had maintained that the inevitable result of not choosing seriously was inner degradation and impoverishment. Poets and novelists today chronicle precisely this disintegration of the self.[13] Psychoanalysts report a dramatic shift from clientele sympton neuroses to "character disorder"[14] since World War II.

There is a grim correlation between Kierkegaard's description of the inwardly bankrupt residents of "the present age" and Christoper Lasch's depiction of contemporary American character in The Culture of Narcissism: American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations.[15] The "new Narcissus" avoids any serious involvement with the world. He maintains aloofness through irony (read "everything's a joke") and critical self-awareness (read "reflective thought"). He prefers merely to think, mostly about himself and his physical-mental-emotional health. This "awareness commenting on awareness" creates an escalating cycle of self-consciousness that inhibits spontaneity (read "free choice").[16]

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[12] Ibid., p. 31.

[13] Christopher Lasch, The Culture of Narcissism: American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations (New York: Warner Brooks, Inc., 1979), p. 69.

[14] Ibid., p. 88.

[15] (New York: Warner Brooks, Inc., 1979).

Such a modus operandi, again according to Lasch, inevitably makes human relationships "bland, superficial and deeply unsatisfying." The current cult of intimacy only masks people who want everybody and choose noboby. "Open marriage" and "open commitments" are the order of the day. Even for contemporary therapists, love comes simply to mean fulfillment of the patient's emotional needs.

> "Love" as self-sacrifice or self-abasement, "meaning" as submission to a higher loyalty--these sublimations strike ... (the contemporary age) as intolerably oppressive, offensive to common sense and injurious to personal health and well-being. To liberate humanity from such outmoded ideas of love and duty has become the mission of the post-Freudian therapies, and particularly of their converts and popularizers....[17]

When thought, even thought about one's self and one's health, takes the place of serious choices and commitments, the person regresses into a "grandiose, narcissistic, infantile, empty self."[18] Today's narcissist is a prime candidate for interminable analysis. He may well use his intellect in the service of evasion rather than true self-discovery.

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[16] Ibid., pp. 75, 174.

[17] Ibid., p. 43.

[18] Ibid., p. 42.

If Haughey and Lasch are right, the over-think and underchoose that so deeply concerned Kierkegaard in his day remain a critical issue today.

## The Individual Has Become Devaluated and Made Subject to the Tyranny of the Public

When reason is absolutized, the free will of the individual is abolished. Choice becomes no more than waiting until so much data is collected, preferably by experts, that the way of action is established beyond doubt. Kierkegaard warned that abdication of free choice has serious consequences. One's lack of subjectivity invites the tyranny of the masses over him. A "levelling" process takes place, a conformity of each individual with society at large.[19]

The age of levelling is an age of resentment of the individual--an ever envious public lowers everyone to the common denominator. Such an age is characterized by formlessness, superficiality, lack of privacy, flirtation, and sloganeering. Truth becomes a matter of "what everybody thinks."[20]

The public is aided in this levelling of any individuality by the help of the press.[21] When that rare "different" person does succeed in standing alone, he may well become a public opinion hero for others to imitate--thus again participating in the levelling process.

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[19] Pp. 47-57 of Kierkegaard's The Present Age contain a chilling description of this process that rings true today.

[20] Ibid., pp. 72-77.

[21] Ibid., pp. 64-66.

For Kierkegaard this submersion of individuals into the public, into movements and systems, was one of the great sins of his age.

> Each age has its own characteristic depracity. Ours is perhaps not pleasure and indulgence or sensuality, but rather a dissolute pantheistic contempt for the individual man. In the midst of all our exultation over the achievements of the age and the nineteenth century, there sounds a note of poorly concealed contempt for the individual; in the midst of the self-importance of the contemporary generation there is revealed a sense of despair over being human. Everything must attach itself so as to be part of some movement.... It is a fear that if they were to become particular existing human beings, they would vanish tracelessly, so that not even the daily press would be able to discover them, still less critical journals, to say nothing at all of speculative philosophers immersed in world history ... for if a man lets go of Hegel he will not ever be in a position to have a letter addressed to him.[22]

Modern Perspective

Kierkegaard's fear of being manipulated by the public, not shared by many of his contemporaries, has become a popular obsession today. As Alvin Toffler notes in Future Shock:

> One of the most persistent myths about the future envisions man as a helpless cog in some vast organizational machine. In this nightmarish projection, each man is frozen into a narrow, unchanging niche in a rabbit-warn bureaucracy. The walls of this niche squeeze the individuality out of him, smash his personality, and compel him, in effect, to conform or die.[23]

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[22] Concluding Unscientific Postscript, translated by David F. Swenson and Walter Lowrie (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1941), pp. 317-318.

[23] Op. cit., p. 124.

His contemporaries are his source of direction--either those known to him as friends or those with whom he is indirectly acquainted through mass media.[28]

As a splendid example of this "other-directed" person, Riesman cites Tolstoy's description of Stepan Arkadyevitch Oblonsky in Anna Karenina:

> Stepan Arkadyevitch took in and read a liberal newspaper, not an extreme one, but one advocating the views held by the majority. And in spite on the fact that science, art, and politics had no special interest for him, he firmly held those views on all subjects which were held by the majority and by his paper, and he only changed them when the majority changed them--or, more strictly speaking, he did not change them, but they imperceptively changed of themselves within him.
>
> Stepan Arkadyevitch had not chosen his political opinions or his views; these political opinions and views had come to him of themselves, just as he did not choose the shapes of his hats or coats, but simply took those that were being worn. And for him, living in a certain society--owing to the need, ordinarily developed at years of discretion, for some degree of mental activity--to have views was just as indispensable as to have a hat. If there was a reason for his preferring liberal to conservative views, which were held also by many of his circle, it arose not from his considering liberalism more rational, but from its being in closer accord with his manner of life.
>
> ... And so liberalism had become a habit of Stepan Arkadyevitch's, and he liked his newspaper, as he did his cigar after dinner, for the slight fog it diffused in his brain.[29]

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[28] Ibid., p. 22.

[29] Cited in Ibid., pp. 23-24.

In the already mentioned The Culture of Narcissism, Christopher Lasch is another who mourns the contemporary person's vulnerability to the pressure of the mass. Today's narcissist depends on others for constant infusions of approval and admiration. "He cannot live without an admiring audience."[30] He is characterized by "dependance on the vicarious warmth provided by others combined with a fear of dependence, a sense of inner emptiness, boundless repressed rage, and unsatisfied oral cravings."[31] Such a person is likely to seek a sense of heightened attaching himself to strong admired figures.[32]

The power of the press intensifies people's vulnerability to outside manipulation. The rise of the mass media blurs the categories of truth and falsehood. To quote Lasch again: "Truth has given way to credibility, fact to statements that sound authoritative without conveying any authoritative information."[33]

The lack of developed individuality (achieved through making serious choices) makes one dangerously vulnerable to the tyranny of the public. What deeply concerned Kierkegaard is of obvious deep concern today.

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[30] P. 38.

[31] Ibid., p. 74.

[32] Ibid., p. 81.

[33] Ibid., p. 141.

## Christianity Itself Has Become Trivialized by Christendom's Objectifying Tendencies

For Kierkegaard, Christianity is the complete antithesis of the absolutization of human reason, abdication of commitment and subjection of the individual to the masses. True Christianity does not propose some harmless theological content (objective knowledge) for the mind to accept. It proposes a paradox of the most dramatic and absurd kind for the individual will to choose absolutely.

The paradox is that "God has been born." The Deity, the Eternal, came into being at a definite moment in time as an individual man.[34] Such a paradox can never be an object of understanding. It is offensive to mental categories. It can only be passionately chosen. This choice, a leaping beyond and against objective evidence that confers and requires enormous energy, is faith. Faith is "the decisive expression for subjectivity, the highest passion in the sphere of human subjectivity."[35] It makes of the believer a New Creation, a real individual.

Faith is vigorous, alive, committed existence. It is passionate clinging to an objective uncertainty, the paradox. Christianity is subjectivity personified.

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[34] Concluding Unscientific Postscript, p. 188.

[35] Ibid., p. 118.

The proponents of reason have tried to domesticate Christianity. By excessive preoccupation with the _what_ of its doctrine, by their attempt to mint Christianity into ideological coinage, they give the impression that faith involves no more than the buying of correct ideas. This completely perverts Christianity, which is more a subjective _how_ than an objective _what_.

> Subjectively, what it is to become a Christian is defined thus: The decision lies in the subject. The appropriation is the paradoxical inwardness which is specifically different from all other inwardness. The thing of being a Christian is not determined by the _what_ of Christianity but by the _how_ of the Christian. This _how_ can only correspond with one thing, the absolute paradox.[36]

The objectifying trivialization of Christianity, which Kierkegaard identified with Hegel, brings it down from an existence form of the most intense level to just another philosophy of life. It has been achieved through the years without a real fight.

> What was more honest in former days about even the most embittered attacks on Christianity was that there was approximately acceptance of what Christianity _is_.
>
> The most dangerous thing about Hegel is that he has modified Christianity and thereby made it conform to his philosophy.
>
> That is altogether characteristic of the age of reason; not to leave the problem as it is and say: No, but to alter the problem and they say: Yes, by all means, we are in agreement.
>
> The hypocrisy of reason is infinitely sly. That is why it is so hard to catch sight of.[37]

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[36] Ibid., p. 540.

[37] _The Diary of Kierkegaard_, pp. 90-91.

In order to achieve the inwardness of Christianity, in order truly to believe, one will have to stand apart from Christendom with its domestications, meet the paradox in all its absurdity, and as an individual take a great leap of faith.

Christianity is in a serious state of decay. In fact, it "simply does not exist." Where there is wholesale idolatry of objective reason, and the submersion of the individual person into the impersonal "public," there can be no Christianity. In fact, it is a distinct misfortune that society is even outwardly "Christendom." It deceives people into believing they really are Christians without passionate exercise of choice. Christianity will have to be shown for what it is--the ultimate exertion, a choice of rationally absurd content.[38]

Kierkegaard was thus anxious to "revise the definition of Christian" and "give a more precise determination to the concept of faith."

> My purpose is to make it difficult to become a Christian, yet not more difficult than it is, nor to make it difficult for stupid people, and easy for clever pates, but qualitatively difficult, and essentially difficult for every man equally, for essentially it is equally difficult for every man to relinquish his understanding and his thinking, and to keep his soul fixed upon the absurd....[39]

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[38] Concluding Unscientific Postscript, p. 495.

[39] Ibid.

## Modern Perspective

In Sacramentum Mundi,[40] Juan Alfaro described Christian faith as a compact act of many aspects. Primarily it can be distinguished into faith as knowledge of revealed truth (fides quae creditur) and faith as personal encounter with God (fides qua creditur).

The Catholic Church of the late Middle Ages came to understand faith primarily as the former--fides quae, faith as knowledge of truths. The polemics of the Reformation served only to deepen this stress, which reached its high water mark in Vatican I Constitution Dei Filius. The participants at that council, coming from a highly intellectualist scholastic background with its bent toward logical systematization, defined faith as "assent to propositions promulgated by the magisterium." Faith was considered primarily a cognitive attitude towards doctrine.[41]

The notion of faith as objective knowledge of revealed truths made its way into popular catechisms and piety. The act of faith taught to most American Catholics before the Second Vatican Council reads:

> O my God, I firmly believe all the sacred truths which Thy holy Catholic Church believes and teaches, because Thou hast revealed them, who canst neither deceive nor be deceived.

This notion of faith is clearly insufficient. Faith thus defined requires no further involvement of the person than a mere nod of the mind. But did Jesus ask us only to accept cognitively new bits of heavenly information--or did he ask us to live a new kind of life? Is Christian faith only objective affirmations of propositions, or existential involvement with the person behind the propositions?

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[40] General editor Adolf Darlap (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968), vol. II, pp. 313-314.

[41] Cf. John McMurry's dissertation, "The Faith versus Faith: An Analysis of Two Concepts of Faith in Roman Catholic Theology of the Twentieth Century" (Berkeley: Graduate Theological Union, 1977), pp. 67-68.

The period following Vatican I saw, in the Catholic Church, "a persistent march in the direction of personalism and subjectivity in the understanding of faith,"[42] a march towards faith understood as _fides qua_. It was characterized by a greater valuation of the concrete individual person and his experience and an aversion to the old static essentialism of the neo-scholastic system. This counter-movement found expression in Vatican I's _Constitution Dei Verbum_, where it coexists ambiguously and ambivalently with the older understanding of faith.[43]

People in the Catholic tradition in particular need a deeper appreciation of faith as _fides qua_. They will need to approach faith not merely as a knowing but as a choosing and a personal getting involved. They will need to discover their responsibility to choose _as individuals_, without excessive reliance on the church to choose for them.

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[42] Ibid., p. 176.

[43] Ibid., pp. 241-247.

As David Tracy points out in Blessed Rage for Order,

> ... our primary task is not the development of a finely tuned autonomous and sincere rationalism, but the far more difficult talk of becoming "individuals," of becoming a self who realizes his or her own radical limitations and possibilities and yet struggles to become a human being of self-transcending authenticity.[44]

In trying to give today's Catholics a more dynamic and involving picture of faith than the trivialized objective version of the recent past, showing faith as the utmost in person-hood and subjectivity, it would be hard to imagine a more useful ally than Soren Kierkegaard. These are precisely the concerns that dominated his entire work.

## Conclusion

The problems Kierkegaard wrestled with and to which his work is a response are these:

1. Exaggerated respect for thinking has supplanted choosing.
2. The individual has become devaluated and made subject to the tyranny of the public.
3. Christianity itself has become trivialized by Christendom's objectifying tendencies.

These remain issues of great modern concern as well. It therefore appears that Kierkegaard meets the first element of the pastoral criterion--he is historical, in vital touch with modern problems.

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[44] (New York: Seabury Press, 1979), p. 11.

45 - 46 Deleted from text.

## B. Is Kierkegaard's Theology Anthropocentric (experiential)?

The second element of the pastoral criterion is anthropocentrism. The language of our century is psychological in a way not true of other times. There has been a true "return to the subject." People no longer define themselves in terms of the world. They define the world in terms of themselves. Disenchantment with the rationalisms and ideologies of the recent past has led people to focus on their own self-experience and their own self-consciousness.

Kierkegaard's extraordinary and perhaps unsurpassed anthropocentricity is an obvious and well-established fact. His focus on man:

> is the single informing theme through the paradoxes, the dialectic, the weird charade of characters, case-histories, pseudonyms and love-scenes. It gives ... consistenty to the vast range of treatises, pamphlets, homilies and diary-jottings. The whole of his work has its unity in his concept of man.[47]

Kierkegaard's picture of man and the special subjectivity of faith which is the human vocation was drawn not from appeal to some outside authority but from minute observation of the living material of human consciousness--the material his own self provided. He initiated a new approach to the study of man, one of self-analysis and introspection.[48]

> Taken as a whole, (his) writings illuminate and bring to a high degree of conscious clarity, the subjective life of the human spirit, the life of passion, emotion, aspiration,

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[47] George Price, The Narrow Pass: Kierkegaard's Concept of Man (New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1963), p. 11.

[48] Ibid., p. 12.

> evaluation, hope, despair, anxiety, dread, confidence, trust, doubt, faith. This is a problem for thought generally neglected by philosophers, at most merely half-heartedly pursued. They have had much more to say about the environing conditions of life, and about the abstract problems of being and knowledge, than about life itself in its inner core; and they have expended a finer workmanship upon objectivities than they have condescended to bestow upon subjectivities. Kierkegaard's writings form an outstanding exception to this general rule; in his case the entire energy of a great genius of reflection was expended upon the clarification of the realm of the subjective, which is the realm of spirit.[49]

Kierkegaard was extraordinarily perceptive in this exploration of human consciousness. Psychoanalyst Ernest Becker spends a large part of his Pullitzer prize-winning The Denial of Death[50] paying tribute to Kierkegaard's penetrating analysis of the human condition. According to Becker, "He (Kierkegaard) gave us some of the best empirical analyses of the human condition ever fashioned by man's mind."[51] In fact, Kierkegaard's picture of man is almost exactly a recap of the modern clinical picture put forth by Rank. This is why:

> we are today comparing Kierkegaard's stature in psychology to Freud's, and why I and others are prepared to call Kierkegaard as great a student of the human condition as was Freud. The fact is that, although writing in the 1840's, he was really post-Freudian, which conveys the eternal uncanniness of genius.[52]

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[49] David Swenson, "Introduction" to Philosophical Fragments (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), p. xvii.

[50] (New York: The Free Press, 1963)

[51] Ibid., p. 67.

[52] Ibid., p. 68.

From this preliminary examination it appears that Kierkegaard meets the second element in our pastoral criterion--his work is anthropocentric.

## C. Is Kierkegaard's Theology Christocentric?

The third element of the pastoral criterion is Christocentrism. In order to be pastorally useful a theology will need clearly to focus not on the various but on what is essential to Christianity--Jesus Christ. In a curious way it is precisely Kierkegaard's anthropocentricity that makes him profoundly Christocentric.

Kierkegaard viewed man as a synthesis of the "soulish" (infinite, eternal) and the "bodily" (finite, temporal, conditioned).[53] Selfhood or spirit emerges when one takes a stand on himself, when he relates to himself by an act of will. Objective knowledge does not make one a real self. Only acts of real commitment, acts of freedom that leap beyond the aloof and non-self-involving act of knowing activate the self. Such decisions give one genuine subjectivity.

The more passionate the choice, the more intense subjectivity becomes.

> The more consciousness, the more self; the more consciousness, the more will, and the more will the more self. A man who has no will at all is no self; the more will he has, the more consciousness of self he has also .... The self is the conscious synthesis of infinitude and finitude which relates itself to itself, whose task is to become itself.[54]

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[53] The Concept of Dread, translated by Walter Lowrie (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), p. 39. See also The Sickness Unto Death, translated by Walter Lowrie in Fear and Trembling and The Sickness Unto Death (Princeton: Princeton Univesity Press, 1968), pp. 146-147.

[54] The Sickness Unto Death, p. 162.

The soulish and the bodily both exerted to their maximum possibility, through an act of will of the greatest passion--this is the fullness of subjectivity, the fully human and alive. Not to be thus exerted is to be in sin, despair, "the sickness unto death."

But how can one achieve this maximum of exertion (faith) that produces total inwardness and selfhood? What is the cure for the lack of subjectivity which is the "sickness unto death?" What is there that a person can choose with so much intensity that he becomes a self? Clearly it cannot be something merely rational, something aloofly appropriated through objective understanding. That requires too little passion.

What is needed is a paradox--something that reason will never be able safely to grasp and put peacefully in its vest pocket, something that will constantly need to be chosen, never becoming probable and ultimately taken-for-granted. In fact, reason instinctively looks for just such a paradox:

> ... one should not think slightingly of the paradoxical; for the paradox is the source of the thinker's passion, and the thinker without a paradox is like a lover without feeling: a paltry mediocrity. But the highest pitch of every passion is always to will its own downfall (that is, to find its limit); and so it is also the supreme passion of the Reason to seek a collision, though this collision must in one way or another prove its undoing. The supreme paradox of all thought is the attempt to discover something that thought cannot think. This

> passion is at bottom present in all thinking, even in the thinking of the individual, in so far as in thinking he participates in something transcending himself.[55]

Paradox inflames subjectivity, stimulates self-awareness. "Paradox and passion are a mutual fit.[56] Absolute passion fits only with absolute paradox--and the Absolute Paradox is Jesus Christ. That the eternal truth has come into being, that God has existed--"there is neither in heaven, nor in earth, nor in the depts, nor in the abberations of the most fantastic thinking, the possibility of a (humanly speaking) more absurd combination.[57] Yet this is exactly what Christianity asserts. The incarnation is a folly to the understanding and an offence to the human heart. As a thought-project it may not be difficult to understand. The difficulty is that Christianity says it is real. In fact, the Absolute Paradox is Christianity's distinguishing feature, its "characteristic mark."[58]

Clinging to such an Absolute Paradox against his understanding requires and generates such total personal exertion that one is finally fully constituted as a subject. He becomes fully actualized, fully alive. He becomes a believer. This is faith. For Kierkegaard,

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[55] Philosophical Fragments, p. 29.

[56] Concluding Unscientific Postscript, p. 206.

[57] Training in Christianity, translated by Walter Lowrie (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), p. 84.

[58] Concluding Unscientific Postscript, p. 480.

> Faith is the objective uncertainty due to the repulsion of the absurd held fast by the passion of inwardness, which in this instance is intensified to the utmost degree. This formula fits only the believer, no one else, not a lover, not an enthusiast, not a thinker, but simply and solely the believer who is related to the absolute paradox.[59]

The God-man is the condition of faith. It is an historical given that, if clung to in the inwardness of faith, makes one the new creation, a self in dynamic equilibrium, a person fully alive. Such a possibility, not imminent in human nature, is granted by divine love.

Kierkegaard's focus on man led him to Jesus Christ. In his view, it is only in relation to the Absolute Paradox that one can come to the heightened existence which is faith. Thus, Kierkegaard's anthropocentricity hed him to a thorough Christocentrism. Jesus Christ is the foremost reality of his religious thought.

It thus appears that Kierkegaard meets the third condition of pastoral usefulness--he is Christocentric.

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[59] Ibid, p. 540.

## D. Is Kierkegaard's Theory Mystagogical?

The fourth and final requirement for a theology to be pastorally useful is that it be mystagogical. It must not be dry doctrine, separated from personal spirituality. It must be interested in leading people beyond its own statements into a vital encounter with the Reality to which its words point.

Kierkegaard is in total sympathy with the need for such a theology. For him there is no such thing as "objective" Christianity--Christianity understood as the mere acceptance of doctrines. If that were the case one need only be concerned about clarifying what the doctrine is and then "approximating it" mentally.

True Christianity can only be a matter of the most personal and self-involving decision. Passionate, total self-involvement will always be the characteristic of true Christianity. As soon as faith becomes a matter of detached reflection, it regresses; it is not faith.

What Kierkegaard affirmed in theory, he clearly practices in his exercise of theology. His descriptions of the human condition, the Absolute Paradox, and the passion required to cling to something as asburd and offensive as the God-man, are themselves full of fire and pathos. His writings abound with sighs, exclamation points and prayer. His use of the pseudonyms, indirect communication, direct address, metaphors and parables are all attempts to involve his reader subjectively. This mystagogical, self-involving quality is not a superfluity, his picture of human development calls for it.

To this must be added my own personal response to Kierkegaard. He has put me in touch with my own sinfulness (lack of selfhood), the dialectical difference between myself and God, and the wonder of God's gracious approach to me in Jesus--in a more vital, personal way than I have ever experienced before.

It appears that Kierkegaard meets the final element of the pastoral criterion. He is mystagogical.

## Conclusion

In order to be pastorally useful, a theology must be historical (in vital touch with contemporary concerns), anthropocentric (experiential), Christocentric, and mystagogical. Our cursory examination suggests that Kierkegaard meets these requirements. We are therefore ready to put forward this hypothesis: Kierkegaard's picture of human development is pastorally useful.

It is premature, however, to accept this hypothesis as a conclusion. After all, our examination of Kierkegaard in terms of the four pastoral elements was sketchy and incomplete. Actually, a dissertation could have been written about his compliance with any one of them. In addition, there may be an as yet undiscovered feature of Kierkegaard that disqualifies him for pastoral usefulness. Having met each of the positive elements of the criteria, he may yet contain some further feature that makes him unusable for our times.

It will be important somehow to test our hypothesis.

# CHAPTER V

## A PROJECT TO EXPLORE THE PASTORAL USEFULNESS OF KIERKEGAARD'S THEORY OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT: BASIC DESIGN

The explorations of the last chapter provided enough information to form a hypothesis: Kierkegaard's theory of human development is pastorally useful. It now remains for us to put together some sort of project that will test this out.

### A. Initial Development

It seems obvious that a testing of the pastoral usefulness of Kierkegaard's picture of human development involves presenting it to actual groups of people and soliciting feedback. Their personal, subjective testimony will not have the precision of hard data. It will be soft, "impressionistic"--but useful for understanding what went on inside them. Of such subjective testimony, Carl Rogers writes: "This kind of study, often scorned by psychologists as being 'merely self-reports,' actually gives the deepest insight into what the experience has actually meant."[1]

But what is the best way to proceed? Consultation with two professors--communication specialist Ross Snyder of San Francisco Theological Seminary in San Anselmo, California, and sociologist Charles Glock of the University of California in Berkeley--proved invaluable in giving the project a more concrete form.

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[1] Carl Rogers, Carl Rogers on Encountered Groups (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), p. 133.

Ross Snyder's most emphatic recommendation was that I "be Kierkegaardian in presenting Kierkegaard." If Kierkegaard's theory is proposed to people as mere objective knowledge for them passively to assimilate, the method will contradict the message. Kierkegaard himself was aware of this danger:

> Suppose that someone wished to communicate the following conviction: Truth is inwardness; there is no objective truth, but the truth consists in personal appropriation. Suppose him to display great zeal and enthusiasm for the propagation of this truth, since if people could only be made to listen to it they would of course be saved; suppose he announced it on all possible occasions, and succeeded in moving not only those who perspire easily, but also the hard-boiled temperaments: what then? Why then there would doubtless be found a few laborers, who had hitherto stood idle in the market-place, and only after hearing this call went to work in the vineyard--engaging themselves to proclaim this doctrine to all. And then what? Then he would have contradicted himself.[1]

Obviously, Snyder continued, some objective input will be required in order to share substantial portions of Kierkegaard's picture of human development with people who have time limitations (a real pastoral situation). This must be accompanied, however, with ample time for free-flowing give-and-take, so that people have a chance to wrestle with it themselves, and subjectively either accepting or rejecting it. Kierkegaard's theory must not be presented in such an overpowering way that people buy into it without any real self-involvement. And the offense and absurdity of the absolute paradox must not be done away with; it must be made to appear just as impossible and awesome as it is.

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[1] Concluding Unscientific Postscript, p. 71.

Snyder also encouraged me to acknowledge the limits of my inquiry. Its results--whatever they are--will not be the final arbiter of whether or not Kierkegaard is a useful pastoral theology today. They will be too "subjective." The results will reflect my own subjectivity as well as the subjectivity of each participant. The best I should hope for from the process--and certainly a very good thing to hope for--is an informed impression of Kierkegaard's pastoral usefulness.

Snyder's last suggestion was that my "working Kierkegaard paper" (the input from me) stress central Kierkegaardian themes and not get lost in over-attention to precision or detail. The important thing isn't to say it all; it's to communicate. Documentation and attention to every possible controverted item will only distract.[1]

Charles Glock was also very encouraging. Although he had done most of his work with "hard" data, he agreed that "soft" impressionistic data could be very useful--in fact the only kind of data possible in such a research.

Glock urged that the project be constructed in such a way that it provide comparisons. Comparisons between groups often yield considerable and unexpected information. He suggested that I present

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[1] In this respect, he was very close to Rohner's belief that theology should be "indirect"--cf. chapter II, section 3.

Kierkegaard to one group, and then two other major theologians to other groups--or that I present Kierkegaard to different groups in three diverse pastoral situations. I opted for the latter, choosing three typical Roman Catholic pastoral settings: the homilies at daily mass, a retreat, and an adult education class.

Glock also encouraged a lowering of expectations concerning the type of participation I could expect. He suggested I keep the number of Kierkegaard sessions to a minimum, since people shy away from lengthy commitments of time and energy. He also warned me not to expect more than one fourth of the participants to take the time necessary to return the feedback.

The advice of Snyder and Glock proved invaluable. Their suggestions were incorporated into the design and execution of the project.

## B. My Input: the working Kierkegaard paper

The next step was to put together a "working Kierkegaard paper" that would form the substance of my presentation of Kierkegaard's theory of human development. My purpose in the paper was not to develop a new critical version of Kierkegaard or a precise annotated tour of his thought. (There are already several of these, exploring Kierkegaard from every conceivable angle.[1]) Instead, I aimed to assemble five popularly palatable presentations that focused on certain basic Kierkegaardian themes. The themes I chose were:

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[1] My own favorites are John E. Carnell's The Burden of Soren Kierkegaard (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1965) and George Price's The Narrow Pass: Kierkegaard's Concept of Man (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1963).

Session I : The Present Age, Spiritlessness
Session II : Angst, Sin
Session III: Aesthetic Stage, Ethical Stage
Session IV : Religious Stage, Choosing the Absolute Paradox
Session V : Works of Love.

I intentionally made the presentations repetitious and oversimplified, so that listeners had a chance to capture the main drift.

In order to suggest that Kierkegaard's theory is scriptural, each presentation began with a relevant Bible passage. Presentations typically ended with one of his prayers, so that participants could experience that dimension of him too.

The results of my work are as follows:

## Session 1: The Present Age

### A. Scripture Readings

A reading from St. Paul's letter to the Romans (12:2)

Do not conform yourselves to the behaviour of the world around you. Let your behaviour change, modelled by your new mind. This is the only way to discover the will of God and know what is good, what it is God wants, what is the perfect thing to do. Do not conform yourselves to the behaviour of the world around you.

The Gospel according to Matthew (13:44-46)

Jesus said: "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field which someone has found; he hides it again, goes off happy, sells everything he owns and buys the field."

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking

> for fine pearls; when he finds one of great value he
> goes and sells everything and buys it."

## B. Presentation

A big part of Christian life is overcoming temptation. Some temptations are easy to identify--murder, lying, cheating, adultery. They come from a certain direction, and you can recognize them as temptations; you can put a name on them and do your best to fight them.

But it is much more dangerous to be tempted by an age, or the spirit of the times. A spirit is not something you put a name on easily. It does not come at you from a certain direction; it is all around you. The spirit of the times is the complex of assumptions, habits and behaviors you acquire from your environment. From early on you are immersed in the spirit of the age from all sides. It is what everybody, what the "public," thinks, feels and acts like. The spirit of the age becomes part of you, and you become part of it before you can either consciously accept it or reject it.

St. Paul warns: Do not conform yourselves to the behavior of this world. Do not pattern yourselves after the spirit of this present age.

Does our present age have a spirit that is dangerously contrary to Christianity and the way that is Jesus? Soren Kierkegaard answers emphatically: YES! The spirit of the age contains a certain characteristic that is absolutely contrary to Christianity. And this constitutes the tremendous danger. It is difficult enough to be tempted by a certain sin; it is awesome to be tempted by the present age.

What is in our present age that is so contrary to the Christian spirit? In a nutshell, our age ... lacks ... seriousness. It lacks commitment. It lacks passion, involvement, character, inwardness.[1] People back off from enduring the tension and uncertainties involved in living their own individual lives and being their own individual selves. Instead, they seek shelter in the crowd or herd.

Kafka once wrote a short story about a town populated by people who had died only didn't realize it yet. Kierkegaard paints a picture of a world populated by people who never really existed as human individuals in the first place.

The problem is definitely not lack of thought.[2] Never before, said Kierkegaard, has there been such a massive consumption of information; we have data banks, and we think things through like crazy. What comes out of all this thought? A decision to think some more later. Like the Athenians who listened detachedly to St. Paul's sermon, we yawn and say, "We'll have to hear more about this later."

Kierkegaard says thinking is being used on a massive scale to avoid doing and choosing and living. In his typical ironic, sharp way, he jokes that it is rare to find someone nervy enough to commit suicide any more. Most people would just weigh the pros and cons. Long before taking the final step a person chokes on his own thoughts or dies of old age!

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[1] The Present Age, pp. 33-35.

[2] Ibid., p. 33.

All the thinking, all the talk, all the committees, all the chatter end up satisfying and relaxing people without anyone ever going so far as to take an action or make an act of will. (I can see this pattern in me a little bit. I believe something ought to be done about some issue, so I call a meeting. We get enraged at the problem, brainstorm ideas, congratulate ourselves for being concerned, and then go home with a peaceful feeling, as if we had actually accomplished something!)

Kierkegaard believed the trend away from serious choices and passion and committed individuality would continue, and he made some chilling prophecies. Someday, in place of people seriously choosing real goals, we would have scattered busyness. Someday in place of the seriousness of committed action, we would have media events, further discussions, publicity ... bumper stickers. Someday in place of the seriousness of real love we would have mere flirtations.[1] Sound familiar?

It is considered chic to remain detached. Keep it mellow, keep it cool. There is no point in getting intense about anything. One of Kierkegaard's fictional characters writes this:

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[1] Ibid., pp. 72-79.

> Let others complain that the age is wicked; my complaint is that it is paltry; for it lacks passion. Men's thoughts are thin and flimsy .... The thoughts of their hearts are too paltry to be sinful .... This is the reason my soul always turns back to the Old Testament and to Shakespeare. I feel that those who speak there are at least human beings; they hate, they love, they murder their enemies ....[1]

If a genuine enthusiasm should spring up, if someone did make a real personal commitment to comething that requires some risk (like going to the Peace Corps, for instance), the children of this age would smile to themselves, perhaps say it is wonderful that he or she is going through this stage, but secretly hope he eventually grows out of it and becomes just as mellow and clever and balanced and detached as they.

To use one of Kierkegaard's brilliant images, it is like the case of a precious jewel which everyone desired, lying far out on a frozen lake where the ice is very thin.[2] It is watched over by the danger of death. Closer in, where the ice is perfectly safe, a crowd has gathered. In an earlier, spirited age, they might applaud the courage of the man who ventured out. They would tremble for him (or her) as he made his daring run. They would grieve over him if he drowned; they would honor him if he succeeded.

But in any age without passion the crowd would calmly, cleverly agree that it was unreasonable to venture that far out for anything. They would congratulate each other for their good sense, and they would dismiss as a fanatic anyone foolhardy enough to take such a risk. How unlike the teaching of Jesus, who says the kingdom of God is like a treasure that a person gives up everything for.

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[1] Either-Or, translated by David Swenson and Lillian Swenson (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959), p. 27.

[2] The Present Age, pp. 37-38

No, the crowd of the present age remains uninvolved. And the duller their lives get, the more they will have to resort to chatter, stupid gossip, and concocted media events to soothe themselves. The important thing for them is not if you have acquired some character, some personality, some vivid individuality by daring to live concretely, by making serious decisions. The only important thing is how much money you have.[1] You can hear it in our language. "He's very successful," you say, and by that is meant nothing at all about the inside of a person, but rather, that he had made lots of money. The assumption often is: "If only I had enough money, I could do anything and be anything I wanted."

When people do not stand for anything inwardly, they are part of this general formless blob called the public. They find their meaning and dignity by casting their lot with the herd. Everyone becomes, through their detachment, just a typical person of a typical time having the same typical public opinion. The power of the press only increases dramatically this tendency to utter conformity, leveling everyone to the lowest denominator. If a person does stand seriously for something, he is labeled a joke, a fanatic. He is resented and eventually treated as a moron or as nothing at all.[1] Has this ever happened to you? Have you ever been made to feel guilty, obsolete, "out of it" for being different or holding different values?

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[1] The Present Age, pp. 40-41.

A dreadful conformity is in the air. It is perhaps merely amusing when an outward conformity becomes apparent, as in the case of clothing styles and fads. It is possible to be patient with kids as they act like Fonzie or Superman or whatever. But it is the greatest and utterly anti-Christian tragedy when the conformity seeps into people's inner selves, and they become reluctant or scared to be individuals, to make their own decisions, to live their own lives. A race of zombies.

Here is an important point Kierkegaard makes. For paganism and for abstract philosophic thought the human race--the whole, the public--*is* the most important thing. The individual is merely a representative of it, a typical specimen. But the Christian believes that in God's eyes the individual is above the mob.[2] He, *as an individual*, is in God's image; and although, in St. Paul's words, *many* may enter the race, it is only the *one*, the person who dares to be the individual (although that is something within the realm of each of us) who wins. Everyone can win the race, but to win--you have to be an individual.

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[1] Ibid., pp. 49-56.

[2] *The Diary of Soren Kierkegaard*, p. 106.

I close. The spirit of our age is to think endlessly, to sloganize, to gossip, and then to go home and get a good sleep. The spirit of our age is not to get too involved, too uptight, too intense about anything. Everything becomes a job. Comedians make a living by showing how stupid it is to be serious about anything. The children of this age think to achieve dignity and meaning by remaining within the safe herd of the public. And, this is the great temptation, the great pattern of the age that St. Paul entreats us not to conform to.

And so, Kierkegaard says: God made you to become an individual. It is only as an individual that you can stand in God's presence. Leap beyond the behavior of this world. That is the most important, that is the sole responsibility you have in eternity. Become an individual. Become yourself.

C. Closing Prayer

> Father in Heaven! Great is Thine infinite kingdom. Thou who bearest the weight of the stars and who governest the forces of the world through immense spaces; numberless as the sands are those who have life and being through Thee. And yet, Thou hearest the cry of all the creatures, and the cry of man whom Thou has specially formed. Thou hearest the cry of all men without confusing their mixed voices and without distinguishing one from another in such a way as to play favorites. Thou hearest not only the voice of one who is responsible for others and so prays to Thee in their name, as if his high function could bring him nearer to Thee; Thou hearest not only the voice of one who prays for dear ones, as if he could thereby attract Thine attention, he who is privileged in having the dear ones; no, Thou hearest also the most miserable, the most abandoned, and most solitary man--in the desert, in the multitude. And if the forgotten one has separated himself from all others; and if in the crowd he has becone unknown--having ceased to be a man except

> as a number on a list--Thou knowest him. Thou hast not forgotten him. Thou rememberest his name; Thou knowest him where he is, retired, hidden in the desert, unperceived in the crowd, in the multitude.[1]

## Session II: Restlessness (Dread and Despair)

### A. Scripture Readings

> A reading from the book of Genesis (12:1-4)
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> Yaweh said to Abram, "Leave your country, your family and your father's house, for the land I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and your name so famous that it will be used as a blessing. I will bless those who bless you; I will curse those who slight you. All the tribes of the earth shall bless themselves by you.
>
> So, Abram went as Yahweh told him, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he left Haran.
>
> The Gospel According to Matthew (8:18-20)
>
> When Jesus saw the great crowds all about him he gave orders to leave for the other side. One of the scribes then came up and said to him, "Master, I will follow you wherever you go." Jesus replied, "Foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head."

### B. Presentation

God's primordial command to each human being is: Be yourself. Become that unique individual you were meant to be. Yesterday, St. Paul warned us not to conform to the times. The present age says: Be one of the crowd. Do all the thinking and talking you want but do not get committed. Do not get serious or passionate about anything. Don't be a fanatic.

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[1] The Prayers of Kierkegaard. ed. by Perry LeFevre (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956), p. 15.

Everyone is born into this world of the mass, the world of conformity. It seeps in, and we're part of the present age before we even have a chance to choose for or against it.

And yet, even though starting in it, certain people are able to get out of it and start a journey towards selfhood, awakened by a great experience that is part of the heritage of each human being. Into the heart of every son and daughter of mankind providence gives restlessness.

Restlessness, impatience, is an enduring quality of human life. You don't have to be churchy to have it; it is part of being human. Restlessness explains progress in the history of the world. But infinitely more important, restlessness is behind the inner history of developing a self, becoming an individual.

Restlessness generates from what Kierkegaard calls the "eternal validity of the self." You were made to be a self. God made you to be a self, and until you become that self you won't be satisfied. The self, that's not even there yet, is calling out to be born ... as if you were pregnant but didn't know it ... pregnant with you. There is something in us, even when we are so underdeveloped and so much a part of the present age that we don't have a self, there is something in us that demands we have a self, get a self, get our act together as concrete alive individual human beings.[1]

If you were just animal there'd be no restlessness. You'd be content to be an animal. Animals don't need psychiatrists. And if you were just an angel, there'd be no restlessness. You'd be pure soul, content to be an angel. But you and I, we human beings are both animal and angel, we are body and soul. We're an unfinished product, an unstable element. We're like oil and vinegar. You have to keep adding energy to them if you want them to come together and be a salad dressing. Existing as a human individual does not just happen. It is a vigorous activity.

If you try to be just a body, living only on the level of the senses, your soul complains and is restless because you are not making it part of you. If you try being just a soul, living only in abstract thoughts and imagination, your body (your flesh and blood concreteness) complains at not being included. You have to be both body and soul to be an alive individual human being.

This restlessness that belongs to everyone Kierkegaard calls by a very technical term--_angst_. It is related to the English word _anxiety_.

In the movie _Encounters of the Third Kind_, selected earthlings are taken into an alien spacecraft and given a compulsion. They come out and are absolutely driven or compelled to get to a certain mountain in Montana. They don't know why they have this compulsion. It seems kooky and weird. And, they're humiliated that they can't explain it to others--to their husbands or wives. But they have this incredible attraction, mixed also with a fear of this attraction they have no control over. They have no idea what they'll find, either. The combination of attraction to the unknown and fear of it--that's angst. What's eating you? people ask, and you have to answer, "I don't know." This restlessness, this attraction and fear ... to nothing in particular you can name ... is the call forward to be a self. How to become a self is not clear. What the self is you're supposed to become is not clear. Not even the church can tell you how to be yourself.

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[1] This is, of course, Kierkegaard's notion _dread_ or _angst_. Cf. _The Concept of Dread_, pp. 37-40, 139-145.

We're condemned and blessed, we human beings, with restlessness, with what Kierkegaard describes as impertinent disquiet, holy hypochondria. We are homesick for a home we've never been to. We must search for a self we've never been. We feel restless and incomplete at age 17, but people feel restless and incomplete in their middle age, and Abraham even felt restless and incomplete at 75!

St. Augustine knew this restlessness well. He wrote, "You made us for yourself, O God, and we are restless until we find our rest in you. Job was restless. He says: "If in bed I say, 'When shall I arise?' then the night drags on and I am restless till dawn." But then at day poor Job is restless for night. Jesus was restless. "The son of man has nowhere to rest his head." All the sons and daughters of man have no real lasting place to rest their heads.

It is good to have this. It is a call to get out of a terrible state you're in, a state of despair.[1] Despair is what you're in when you're not a complete self, when you're not being an individual, when you're not fully alive. Despair--not being a self--is for Kierkegaard the definition of sin. You were made to be a human individual, a body and soul synthesis; and not to be what God calls you to be is sin. This despair--not being a real self, being in sin--is a real problem. It may manifest itself in boredom, hopelessness, defiance, dullness, or whatever. It may be suppressed. But despair, sin, not being a self, is literally sickness unto spiritual death. And this is the state we are in. For Kierkegaard Christianity is not some idle pleas-and chatter; it is medicine offered to human beings as we are literally lying on our deathbeds.[2]

Despair says, "You'te miserable and nobody here. You may never get out." But angst comes and says, "You're standing on the edge of a cliff in the middle of the night but you have some freedom. Go ahead. It's scary, but it's alluring. Jump! Maybe you haven't reached the end of your rope but the beginning of a new stage of your existence." That is the eternal validity of your yet-unformed self calling out to you. It is part of you yet unborn, unput together, unimagined, but it says in your depths, "Go ahead. Jump!"

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[1] The Sickness Unto Death, pp. 208, 154-161.

[2] Ibid., p. 142.

Everyone has this restlessness, this angst. You can go into psychoanalysis for 50 years, and you still won't get rid of it. Carmel is full of rich people who have achieved all their conscious goals and yet still are not satisfied. They think, "Here I am. I have all this money. I have my family and my house. And I'm still restless. What's wrong with me!" Angst isn't a hangup, some trauma or neurosis inflicted on you from the past. It is not a disease of the spirit but a sign of your lofty calling.

It is possible, of course, to respond to this restlessness, this angst, this call to be a real self, by connecting it foolishly with some finite object. "I know what I'm restless for," you say. "I'm just restless for my first million dollars, and when I get that I'll be mellow and content." Except that after that first million, the restlessness will still be there haunting you. Perhaps after mistaking forty or fifty different objects or beautiful women or faulty accomplishments with the goal of this angst, you may wonder what it takes to make you happy or contented. You might get down on yourself and say, "What's wrong with me. I have everything I want and I'm still restless. I must be crazy." You perhaps do have everything you need ... except what is most necessary. You may have gained the whole world, but have never possessed a self.

As I said, people make all kinds of inadequate responses to this wonderful angst, this restlessness. One may try to drug it away, drink it away, busy-bee it away. There is always a chance, however, that someone might dare to listen to it, feel it, and go with it.

I suppose you could say for Kierkegaard that angst is a sort of special religious experience and calling that is given to everyone.[1] It is the scary but alluring call forward to freedom, to true selfhood, to God. To quote him:

> To suppose that angst is an imperfection merely betrays straightlaced cowardice, since, to the contrary, the greatness of anxiety is the very prophet of the miracle of perfection, and inability to become anxious is a sign of one's being either an animal or an angel, which according to the teaching of scripture is less perfect than being a human being.[2]

## C. Closing Meditation

> In one of Grimm's fairy tales there is the story of a youth who went out in search of adventures for the sake of learning what it is to fear or be in *angst*. We will let that adventurer go his way without troubling ourselves to learn whether in the course of it he encountered the dreadful. On the other hand I would say that learning to know *angst* (restlessness) is an adventure which every man has to affront if he would not go to perdition either by not having known *angst* or by sinking under it. He therefore who has learned rightly how to be in *angst* (how to be restless) has learned the most important thing. If a man were a beast or an angel, he would not be able to be in *angst*. Since he is a synthesis he can be in *angst*, and the greater the *angst*, the greater the man.[3]

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[1] *The Concept of Dread*, 139-145.

[2] *Soren Kierkegaard's Journals and Papers*, ed. and trans. by Howard and Edna Hong (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1967), vol. I, p. 39.

[3] *The Concept of Dread*, p. 139.

## Session III: The Aesthetic and The Ethical

### A. Scripture Readings

A reading from the Book of Ecclesiastes (2:1-11)

I said to myself, "Come, now, let me try you with pleasure and the enjoyment of good things." But behold, this too was vanity. Of laughter I said: "Mad!" and of mirth: "What good does this do?" I thought of beguiling my senses with wine, though my mind was concerned with wisdom, and of taking up folly, until I should understand what is best for men to do under the heavens during the limited days of their life. I understood great works; I built myself houses and planted vineyards; I made gardens and parks, and set out in them fruit trees of all sorts. And I constructed for myself reservoirs to water a flourishing woodland. I acquired male and female slaves, and slaves were born in my house. I also had growing herds of cattle and flocks of sheep, more than all who had been before me in Jerusalem. I amassed for myself silver and gold, and the wealth of kings and provinces. I got for myself male and female singers and all human luxuries. I became great, and I stored up more than all others before me in Jerusalem; my wisdom, too stayed with me. Nothing that my eyes desired did I deny them, nor did I deprive myself of any joy, but my heart rejoiced in the fruit of all my toil. This was my share for all my toil.

But when I turned to all the works that my hands had wrought, and to the toil at which I had taken such pains, behold! All was vanity and a chase after wind, with nothing gained under the sun.

The Gospel of Mark (8:34-36)

He summoned the crowd with his disciples and said to them: "If a man wishes to come after me, he must deny his very self, take up his cross, and follow in my steps. Whoever would preserve his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will preserve it. What profit does a man show who gains the whole world and destroys himself in the process?

## B. Presentation

You and I might be born into a world that wants conformity. There might be a great deal of social pressure on you to remain average--to have the same opinions, beliefs and values that everyone else has. But inside every person gnaws a relentless restlessness, an angst. The self, the individual self that isn't born or known, or even there as a remote possibility, nevertheless cries out to be. We have no lasting place to lay our head.

If and when a person wakes up out of a mindless sleep of the crowd and leaps forward, he will be in what Kierkegaard calls the aesthetic sphere, or the aesthetic level of existence.[1] A person in this stage starts out, as we all do, with the simple uncomplicated desire to live life agreeably. What gives pleasure is good. What causes pain is bad. The aesthetic person lives life according to a sort of gratification principle. He lives only to deepen his pleasure.

Gratification can come from any number of things. It might be pleasure that comes from sex; such a person will become promiscuous. It might be pleasure from listening to music, from reading a good book, or even the pleasurable feeling that comes from going to a church service! A friend, for someone in this stage, is someone who makes you feel good. And she's your friend only as long as she makes you feel good.

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[1] Kierkegaard's picture of the aesthetic stage is pseudonymously described in vol. I. of Either-Or.

A person in this aesthetic stage has no real sense of personal history. If he happens to be getting pleasure at the moment, everything is great. He is on top of the world. It is like he has never had any bad times. And if he happens not to be getting pleasure at the moment, he is miserable. It is like he has never had any good times. The aesthetic person does not have enough of a self to have a memory. His life is not an ongoing story but a disconnected series of short episodes. For him, happiness or unhappiness depends completely on luck. If there is something available to give pleasure, he is fine. If there is nothing available to give pleasure, he is miserable.

As a person continues living, he or she will inevitably discover that life does not give pleasure all the time. Adverse circumstances of life, social limits, old age, any number of things interfere with our efforts to have constant spontaneous pleasure. Reflecting on this, a person might develop to the point where he gets a little cagey. He is still after pleasure pure and simple, of course, but he has discovered he must use a little craftiness to maximize the pleasure. He will discriminate which activities provide greater, longer-lasting pleasure and go after those. He may learn to enjoy and relish not just sexual orgasm, for instance, but the clever planning of a good seduction. He might enjoy not merely lots of money but the different game plans he can concoct in order to acquire it.

Starting to reflect on your own life is a dangerous thing to do.

A reflective aesthetic person will notice how fragile is his happiness, depending as it does purely on externals. You can only seduce so many women before you get bored. And eventually, things are bound to get old. You can only make so much money before you get bored. You can only collect so many religious highs, eat so many gourmet meals, go on so many vacations, etc., before the thrill goes and you get bored. You may carefully rotate your pleasures, but eventually and irresistably, boredom sets in.

Being bored is an extremely unpleasurable thing. The Book of Ecclesiastes' passage that was read is a good description of the bored aesthete. A person in the aesthetic sphere, frantically wrestling with endemic boredom, might do almost anything to get rid of it. He might go on ever more spectacular vacations, he might turn to hang-gliding or sky-diving, he might try to set a record in the Guinness book. He might flirt with cults and the diabolical. Not out of malice--he is not deep enough to have a true malice. But out of sheer boredom, he might flirt with evil. At least it might be a different experience.

But he will get only temporary relief from even the best planned, most far out pleasures, and then the boredom returns again with a vengeance.

Everything becomes regrettable. To quote Kierkegaard:

> If you marry, you will regret it; if you do not marry, you will also regret it .... Laugh at the world's

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[1] Either/Or, vol. I, pp. 37-38.

> follies, you will regret it; weep over them, you will also regret that .... Hang yourself, you will regret it; do not hang yourself, and you will also regret that .... My philosophy is at least easy to understand, for I have only one principle, and I do not even proceed from that .... I do not proceed from my principle; for if I did, I would regret it, and if I did not, I would also regret that.[1]

What do you do when you have tried everything, seen everything, tasted everything, and it is all no longer worth staying with? There is nothing new left to enjoy. Lust, learning, adventures, foods, vacations, old wines, the California good life, have all been savored a thousand times and gotten old. Life is a drag, a total disappointment. Is that all there is, my friend? Where do I go from here?

Kierkegaard says after a certain amount of boredom and unhappy drifting something might happen. Your angst-restlessness is stirring you, and you might leap forward: your will might stir. You might start making choices. You might decide it is high time you got yourself together, took charge of yourself. You have had desires before, but they were haphazard, disconnected, episodal. One desire had the same weight as another. But now you might decide it is time to make a commitment, it is time to choose one of those desires and make it a strong, self-defining act of will.

People who wake up their wills and start making serious choices--commitment--have leapt out of the aesthetic stage (the pleasure principle stage) into a higher level--the ethical level.[1] Three good examples of choices that put a person into a whole new sphere of existence are marriage, friendship, and a vocation. In each of these choices there is seriousness, commitment, and permanence. The quality of the commitment will last you through the changes of good and enthusiasms of the moment. It situates these in a larger context of meaning--fidelity.

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[1] Either/Or, vol. I, pp. 37-38.

The ethical person can look back at the aesthetic period of his life and say, "The trouble with my miserable life back then was not my bad luck, or that life outside was rotten. The problem was me. My will was not alive yet."

And now, with a feeling of great power and exhilaration, a person takes charge of his own life. The discovery of the will has been called the Cinderella of modern psychology. Pop psychology says, "You can do it! You can do anything you want if you just decide to! You are totally capable. You simply take a good look at yourself, get clear about who you are and how you got that way. Then you pick some talents you have and make them projects, tasks. You select some role, a role acceptable to society, and you try to express your whole self and fulfill your whole self totally through it."

You say, "In throwing myself totally into this cause or goal, I will be fulfilled. I will find total self-fulfillment by being a perfect husband or wife, by doing an excellent job at my vocation." Perhaps your chosen goal will be religious. "I will obey all religious laws exactly," you say, "and thus make myself perfect. I will thus give meaning to my own life. I will make myself into a new creation." It does not make much difference what you choose. But choosing it with vigor, with seriousness, with passion, will give you meaning and purposefulness that people in the aesthetic stage simply could not understand.

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[1] Kierkegaard's pseudonymous description of this stage is contained in Either/Or, vol. II.

Now learning to use your will, choosing, giving yourself meaning and coherence, is a gigantic leap forward. It is liberating. It is empowering. The power to choose, the beginning of freedom, the power of "Either/Or," turns your life from being a series of unrelated episodes into being a story.

One of Kierkegaard's fictional characters, Judge Williams, says this:

> For freedom, therefore, I am fighting (partly in this letter, partly and principally within myself). I am fighting for the future, for either/or. This is the treasure I desire to bequeath to those whom I love in the world; yea, if my little son were at this instant of an age when he could thoroughly understand me, and my last hour had come, I would say to him, "I leave to thee no fortune, no title and dignities, but I know where there lies buried a treasure which suffices to make thee richer than the whole world, and this treasure belongs to thee, and thou shalt not even express thanks to me for it lest thou take hurt to thine own soul by owing everything to another. This treasure is deposited in thine own self: there is an either/or which makes a man greater than the angels."[1]

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[1] Either/Or, vol. II, p. 180.

It is a treasure .... Free will. Many people never get this far. But some questions rise. Can you really do and be anything you want just by deciding to? Can a person really save himself, recreate himself, through his own will? Was Jesus wrong when he said you have to lose yourself to find yourself?

C. Closing Prayer

> Father in Heaven! What is a man without Thee! What is all that he knows, vast accumulation though it be, but a chipped fragment if he does not know Thee! What is all his striving, could it ever encompass a world, but a half-finished work if he does not know Thee: Thee the One, who art one thing and who art all! So may Thou give to the intellect, wisdom to comprehend that one thing; to the heart, sincerity to receive this understanding; to the will, purity that wills only one thing. In prosperity may Thou grant perseverance to will one thing; amid distractions, collectedness to will one thing, in suffering, patience to will one thing. Oh, Thou that givest both the beginning and the completion, may Thou early, at the dawn of day, give to the young man the resolution to will one thing. As the day wanes, may Thou give to the old man a renewed remembrance of his first resolution, that the first may be like the last, the last like the first, in possession of a life that has willed only one thing.[1]

Session IV: The Moment

A. Scripture Readings

A Reading from Paul's letter to the Romans (Rm. 7:14-20,24)

We know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin. I do not understand my own actions. For I

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[1] The Prayers of Kierkegaard, p. 31.

> do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. Now if I do what I do not want, I still agree that the law is good. So then it is no longer I that do it, but sin which dwells within me. For I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh. I can will what is right, but I cannot do it. For I do not do the good I want; the evil I do not want is what I end up doing. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I that do it, but sin which dwells within me .... Woe is me! Who will deliver me from this body of death?
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> The Gospel of John (10:22-23)
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> It was the time when the feast of Dedication was being celebrated in Jerusalem. It was winter, and Jesus was in the Temple walking up and down in the Portico of Solomon. The Jews gathered round him and said, "How much longer are you going to keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly." Jesus replied: "I have told you, but you do not believe. The works I do in my Father's name are my witness; but you do not believe, because you are no sheep of mine. The sheep that belong to me listen to my voice; I know them and they follow me. I give them eternal life; they will never be lost and no one will ever steal them from me. The Father who gave them to me is greater than anyone, and no one can steal from the Father. The Father and I are one."
>
> The Jews fetched stones to stone him, so Jesus said to them, "I have done many good works for you to see, works from my Father; for which of these are you stoning me?" The Jews answered him, "We are not stoning you for doing a good work but for blasphemy: you are only a man and you claim to be God."

## B. Presentation

Let me review the picture of human development that has been emerging. We began back in the present age, a vast faceless crowd of conformity, where everyone resembles everyone else. People in the present age get their behaviors, feelings, opinions from their peer group. There is no seriousness or passion about anything. Just chic, cool detachment.

You make your first leap forward, if you do, into the aesthetic sphere. In this sphere you have the simple uncomplicated desire to live life agreeably. You live for gratification--sex, food, music, good books, vacations, being with people that make you feel good. If something gives you pleasure, it is good. If it gives you pain, it is bad.

It soon becomes obvious that life around you is not going to give you spontaneous pleasure all the time. And so our person in the aesthetic stage gets crafty. He learns to plan for his pleasure. He has to try new things, different approaches. To avoid boredom he must get involved in sky-diving or the farthest out, weirdest things possible, perhaps even cults. He may rotate his pleasures carefully. But after a while it all gets boring. You can only go on so many vacations, try so many seductions, eat so many gourmet dinners, etc., before the boredom of living only for illusive pleasure becomes almost unbearable. Towards the end of the aesthetic sphere our happy pleasure seeker, who has applied every ounce of thought he can to how to maximize his pleasure, ends up very unhappy. He says, "What a drag life is!" His despair, his lack of having a self, cuts deep.

Such a person will feel restless and dissatisfied, drawn to but also frightened by something unknown. He may of course deny the angst, or resign himself to it. Or, he might leap forward into the next stage. He might begin using his will. He might say: "I'm tired of being a slave to my scattered moods and impulses. I am tired of my happiness being at the mercy of external things I cannot control. I have got to take charge of my own life. I have got to take myself in hand. I am going to take a good look at myself and make some choices, some serious commitments." And so, using the tremendous power of free will, you choose. You choose seriously, and your decisions change and transform your constitution as a person. You commit yourself to a marriage, a friendship, a cause, a life's work or vocation.

And it is so good, so exhilarating to take your life into your own hands. For a while you feel like Helen Reddy. "If I have to, I can do anything." "Yes, I am capable and able," you say, and very much of modern psychology agrees with you. "Yes, I can take charge of my life and make myself into a new creation. My perfect work of art is going to be myself. Yes, I can give meaning to my life through these commitments. Yes, I can save myself."

It is a wonderful thing to discover the use of your free will. All glory to free will! Except there are some problems. If there is no authority in the world except you and your free will, how will you decide what to choose, what to throw yourself into? How can you decide what will be absolute for you? But leave that issue aside ... let's say you throw yourself into a marriage, a vocation, or even something religious like keeping the Jewish law (which is what St. Paul chose). Can you really give yourself completely and unreservedly into it? St. Paul noticed that there was always part of him that held back. He really could not make himself perfect, even though he chose to.

And the harder he tried the more frustrating it was.

Is not it true that people with good marriages, loyal friendships, or people enormously successful at working for a cause ... still do not feel totally fulfilled. Is not the world full of highly successful, highly self-actualizing people who say, "I'm still in despair. I'm still not a full self."

And if you do not just resign yourself to it, and if you do not in anger and rebellion defy it and keep banging your head against a stone wall, trying by sheer force of will to do the impossible, you might just be restless and anxious enough to make another leap forward.

At that time a man may walk up to you and say, "I am the God.[1] I am the Absolute. I have come here incognito as a humble servant, because I do not want you to flee from me or be intimidated by me, but to love me and choose me. I am the one to be chosen absolutely and without reservation. Please do not run from me because I seem impossible. Apart from me you cannot be a full self."

He continues, "Up until this time you have been in terrible sin. Everyone is in sin. Everyone falls drastically short of being a full self, of living with singleness of mind towards that which is absolute. Everyone falls short of full selfhood by not wishing to be himself or by wishing to be himself in the wrong way, trying to make himself a self in a way which cannot work because it does not fully activate his whole self. You can only become a full human self, a new creation, by having a relative relation to what is relative and an absolute relation to what is absolute. I am here, out of love, to grant you this condition. I am the absolute."

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[1] What follows is a loose paraphrase of Kierkegaard's most beautiful piece of writing, found on pp. 32-45 of Philosophical Fragments.

The man standing in front of you says: "I, a concrete man, am the absolute. I am the absolute authority, before whom the authority of this world, of ethics, of human reason must diminish and become relative. This is the most important moment of your life. It is grace, calling you to a miracle. Choose me."

Who could believe such a thing? Your pride and your intelligence are offended.[1] They rush forward and say, "This is impossible. It is impossible that God is this man. Resign yourself to your sorrow and your despair. Who could believe that the absolute God could come into history as a human being to convict us of our sin and offer us the condition for becoming a self and entering salvation." It *is* impossible, except that, as Kierkegaard says, "God is that all things are possible," even the impossible.

Your pride says: "I'm not *that* bad off. I do not need such a savior. But the *angst* has risen, the anxiety after something which you know not. It scares and yet draws you: "Leap! Leap into his arms. Leap even if you must swim over 70,000 fathoms of murky dark."

The leaping, if you jump, will never stop. The human mind never will be able to understand the mystery of Jesus Christ, the God-Man standing in front of you beckoning. The very idea of it will seem absolutely absurd. You will never be able to explain it to yourself, let alone another believer.

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[1] Kierkegaard's fullest treatment of this offense is in *Training in Christianity*, pp. 79-144. Cf. especially pp. 79-85.

If salvation meant believing a dozen correct pieces of information about God then the devil himself would be saved, for who knows true things about God more clearly than the devil. But you can learn pieces of information, find them true and even interesting, and then go peacefully to bed.

But that God is this man standing in front of you commanding your total obedience ... that will require so much exertion to believe that you will never be able to go to bed. And the constant exertion of your will, choosing always this objective impossibility that Jesus is Lord, wakens you to new life and makes you a new creation. You come together and become a real self.

Total obedience and loyalty to what is intellectually an impossibility, that is faith. Taking the most unlikely thing in the world--and treating it as if it were the surest thing of all--that is faith.[1] Such an act could only come out of a heart educated by angst. It could never be the result of some really clever convincing arguments.

This is the faith that justifies. This is the opposite of sin. This is the condition of being a self. This is the command of the

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[1] Concluding Unscientific Postscript, p. 540.

Absolute, who comes to you as a man so that you will not be intimidated or overwhelmed, but so that you will answer Love with Love.

I close. Jesus, the Lord, God who is a man, stands in your midst and offers you a tremendous possibility that is really an impossibility. He says, "I am the God. I am the absolute. Love me. Choose me. Follow me. You will find yourself."

C. Closing Meditation

> Behold where He stands--the God! Where? There; do you not see him? He is the God; and yet he has not a resting place for his head, and he dares not lean on any man lest he cause him to be offended. He is the God; and yet he picks his steps more carefully than if angels guided them, not to prevent his foot from stumbling against a stone, but lest he trample human beings in the dust, in that they are offended in him. He is the God; and yet his eye rests upon mankind with deep concern, for the tender shoots of an individual life may be crushed as easily as a blade of grass .... This is the God as he stands upon the earth .... God must suffer all things, endure all things, make experience of all things. He must suffer hunger in the desert, he must thirst in the times of his agony, he must be forsaken in death, absolutely like the humblest--behold the man![1]

Session V: Works of Love

A. Scripture Readings

A reading from the first letter of John (4:7-11)

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[1] *Philosophical Fragments*, pp. 39-40.

Beloved,
let us love one another
because love is of God;
everyone who loves is begotten of God
and has knowledge of God.
The man without love has known nothing of God,
for God is love.
God's love was revealed in our midst in this way:
he sent his only Son to the world
that we might have life through him.
Love, then consists in this:
not that we have loved God
but that he has loved us
and has sent his Son as an offering for our sins.
Beloved,
if God has loved us so,
we must have the same love for one another.

This is the word of the Lord.

The Gospel of Matthew (22:34-39)

When the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, they assembled in a body; and one of them, a lawyer, in an attempt to trip him up, asked him, "Teacher, which commandment of the law is the greatest?" Jesus said to him: "You shall love the Lord your God with your whole heart, with your whole soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and first commandment. The second is like it: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

## B. Presentation

God created the self in such a way that it can never get out of despair, never get itself together, until it relates itself absolutely to the absolute. He made us for himself. Simply being human beings, we are given an un-get-over-able problem that plunges us deeper and deeper into despair until as individuals we finally become ourselves in God through Jesus.

We are born into the present age, you and I. Without our even choosing it, the pressures of the environment, of the press, of society, of our peer group start forming us into the average person. They try to keep us level with everyone else so that we are utterly conformed in our habits, in our opinions, in everything, to the spirit of the times.

But the unborn self that God made us to be calls out to us. Angst--the attraction and the repulsion of the unknown. You feel restless, anxious although you cannot give a particular reason why. You go into the aesthetic sphere. In this level of existence a person is dominated by the uncomplicated desire to enjoy himself and have a pleasant life. For a while it is pleasant to give yourself over to spontaneous pleasure--but outside conditions will not let you receive spontaneous pleasure all the time. So you start planning. You get crafty. You pursue those things with the greatest and longest-lasting pleasure value. But when you have tasted all you cared to, eaten thousands of gourmet meals, traveled wherever your means take you, rotated stimulations judiciously, you will eventually discover you are still bored. You are bored silly and there seems no chance life will get any better. You go into quiet depression about how crummy life is around you.

And yet the restlessness of the unborn self keeps calling, attracting and yet scaring you. And the despair keeps gnawing. And although you may stay there in boredom, or retreat into mindlessness, a wonderful thing may happen. You may begin to understand that the problem is not a malevolent or unlucky life outside you. The problem is you. You have been scattered, aimless. And so in a great leap you take charge of yourself. You start exercising your will. You take stock of your past, your talents, your capabilities; and you throw yourself into projects and goals. "I will give myself meaning in my life," you say, "by devoting myself to this marriage, to this friendship, to this vocation. I will make myself into a new creation."

And it seems fine, for a while. But the unborn self--the self God made you to be but that does not exist--the unborn self calls out again, relentlessly. You become anxious, dissatisfied, You discover that there are difficulties in being your own authority, your own source of meaning. How do you decide what to throw yourself into? And even once you do come up with a lofty goal, and really have at it, there is always part of you that is not being expressed. You are not totally fulfilled. And so, no matter how outwardly successful you appear at your chosen goals, there is despair--terrible despair, because there is nothing more within your power to do--and you are still not a self.

Now to the person who has despaired properly, completely, who might have been taught by the school of the ethical how to choose and might be desperate enough now to try anything, a man may walk up. "I am the absolute God," he says. "You must choose me. Absolutely. Without reservation. Totally. I am an insult to your intelligence; you cannot make sense out of me with your mind--that I, an individual man, am God. I am also an insult to your pride; I am divine judgment that you are not able, by the force of your will alone, to save yourself, establish your self, save yourself. You have been in despair, in deep and terrible sin because you have not been the self you were ordained by God to be. And yet with my lips I promise you the forgiveness of sins. Against your intellect, over the constant objections of your offended pride, choose me. It will require exertion. You will be forever swimming over 70,000 fathoms. And yet in the exertion you will become a new creation. I am the God. Choose me."

To choose Christ completely is to do three things. First, the person who chooses the Christ will trust Christ completely. He will hear the laughter and derision of the world and of all sensible people, and even the sneers of his own intellect and pride about the absurdity of what he is doing--yet he will trust Christ completely. When he sees how deeply he has been in sin and how far short he falls of the commands of Christ he will suffer inwardly. (In fact, this inward suffering is an enduring quality of true Christian life.[1]) He will be tempted to despair of the forgiveness of sins. Yet in this too he will trust Christ, who says to him constantly: "Believe it, nevertheless, for I have laid down my life to procure the forgiveness of thy sins; so believe it then, a stronger assurance is impossible."[2]

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[1] Concluding Unscientific Postscript, p. 405.

[2] Training in Christianity, p. 271.

Second, he will copy Christ.[1] He will not simply admire Jesus but follow him. He will not test and judge Jesus Christ. Jesus is the model by which he will test and judge himself. He will cling absolutely to Jesus Christ as absolute, and only relatively to everything else, as relative. He will struggle to make every moment of his life a coherent expression of his absolute commitment to the Absolute.

Finally, and flowing from these, he will obey the command of the God-Man who says, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." He will perform works of love.

The idea of love that Christianity brings collides violently with the idea the world has of love. The world's idea of love, Kierkegaard says, is nothing more than self-interest.[2] You are spontaneously attracted to someone. You enjoy being with him or her, she makes you feel good, so you say you love her. To have affection for this sort of person is only a form of self-love. The other becomes little more than an extension of you. There is no radical choice involved. You just drift into it. Such love is preferential, exclusive.

But the Absolute comes into the world and says, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor." Your neighbor is and will always be the one you see, the one you are with, everybody. You shall love him or him who is at hand, in obedience, through a free act of your will. You choose to love no matter what his characteristics. You must love those from an earthly point of view below you. You must love those on the same plane as you. You must love those above you, even if they look askance at your thinking they could need or want your love. You shall love each one of them as equals, as neighbors.[1]

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[1] Ibid., p. 232.

[2] Works of Love, translated by Howard and Edna Hong (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), p. 133.

If your works of love depended only on your moods or passing feelings of benevolence, they would be the chanciest of acts. They would be expressions of mere self-interest producing a union of selfishness--what the world calls love. Or if you tried to love everyone because of obedience to some highfaluting abstract principle, that would be impossible to do with great consistency. The will of itself is not omnipotent. But if you choose to love as the result of a command from the absolute, if your motive for love is obedience to the God-Man ... that might have the endurance and tensile strength of real Christian love.[2]

And this is the love that will endure all things--love that comes from a will choosing Jesus absolutely. After all, even if your love for someone is betrayed, Kierkegaard says, their betrayal, something infinite and relative, will pass away, but your love will endure forever.[3]

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[1] Ibid., p. 50.

[2] Ibid., p. 25.

[3] Ibid., p. 5.

I close. God made you and me in such a way that we are in despair, not fully constituted, not fully together and alive, until we become individual selves in Him through obedience to his Son. Nothing less than this will do--for God, or for you. In His loving kindness the Almighty calls you to be not a tree or a stone, nor a typical member of some mindless crowd. In His loving kindness, the Almighty, for whom all things are possible, calls you not to be a slave of moods frantically chasing after pleasure, or someone in pride trying in frustration to go it alone and save himself. Out of despair, through angst, the Almighty calls each person to be what is higher than an angel. He calls each person to be an individual, a self, a believer.

And he grants the possibility for this, in Jesus Christ our Lord. To Him be glory forever and ever. Amen.

### C. Closing Prayer

> O Lord Jesus Christ, Thou did not come to the world to be served, but also surely not to be admired or in that sense to be worshipped. Thou wast the way and the truth--and it was followers only Thou didst demand. Arouse us therefore if we have dozed away into this delusion, save us from the error of wishing to admire Thee instead of being willing to follow Thee and to resemble Thee.[1]

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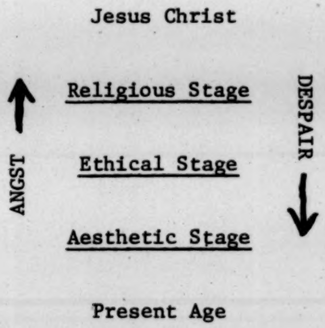
[1] The Prayers of Kierkegaard, p. 96.

C. My Input: A Diagram and Handouts

In order to stress the overall picture of Kierkegaard's theory of human development and locate the individual elements in proper perspective, I used a progressive poster--adding at each session the new element(s) under discussion. The completed poster was as follows:



Jesus Christ

Religious Stage

Ethical Stage

Aesthetic Stage

Present Age

In the poster I tried to use different colors and shapes to give the more visually inclined participants a hint of the flavor of the words. Thus the "Present Age" was printed in black flat characters, "despair" stark black, "angst" with two contrasting colors (blue and red), "Aesthetic Stage" multi-colored but vaguely formed, "Ethical Stage" written as the ethical but intensified with red and orange.

Another source of input was handouts. These were collections of Kierkegaard quotes on the various topics, printed on different colored sheets and passed out at the end of each session. They are as follows.

## #1. Kierkegaard on "the present age"

> Our age is essentially one of understanding and reflection, without passion, momentarily bursting into enthusiasm and shrewdly relapsing into repose. (33)
>
> Nowadays not even a suicide kills himself in desperation. Before taking the step he deliberates so long and so carefully that he literally chokes with thought. It is even questionable whether he ought to be called a suicide, since it is really thought which takes his life. He does not die _with_ deliberation but _from_ deliberation. (33)
>
> ... its (the present age's) ability, virtuosity and good sense consists in trying to reach a judgment and a decision without ever going so far as action. If one may say of the revolutionary period that it runs wild, one would have to say of the present that it runs badly. (33)
>
> If the jewel which every one desired to possess lay far out on a frozen lake where the ice was very thin, watched over by the danger of death, while, closer in, the ice was perfectly safe, then in a passionate age the crowds would applaud the courage of the man who ventured out, they would tremble for him and with him in the danger of his decisive action, they would grieve over him if he were drowned, they would make a god of him if he secured the prize. But in an age without passion, in a reflective age, it would be otherwise. People would think each other clever in agreeing that it was unreasonable and not even worth while to venture so far out. (37)
>
> The present age with its sudden ehthusiasms followed by apathy and indolence is very near the comic ... (39)
>
> No one is any longer carried away by the desire for the good to perform great things, no one is precipitated by evil into atrocious sins, and so there is nothing for either the good or the bad to talk about, and yet for that very reason people gossip all the more, since ambiguity is tremendously stimulating and much more verbose than rejoicing over goodness or repentance over evil. (43)
>
> ... in the end the whole age becomes a committee. (44)
>
> When people's attention is no longer turned inwards, when they are no longer turned inwards, when they are no longer satisfied with their own inner religious lives, but turn to

> others and to things outside themselves, where the relation is intellectual, in search of that satisfaction, when nothing important ever happens to gather the threads of life together with the finality of a catastrophe, that is the time for talkativeness. (69)
>
> But talkativeness is afraid of the silence which reveals its emptiness. (69)
>
> ... man's only salvation lies in the reality of religion for each individual. (56)
>
> (Quotes are from The Present Age, Harper Torchbook, 1962.)

#2. Kierkegaard on Sin (Despair) and Angst (Anxiety, Dread)

D From the Christian point of view everything, absolutely
everything, should serve for edification. The sort of
learning which is not in last resort edifying is pre-
E cisely for that reason unchristian. Everything that is
Christian must bear some resemblance to the address which
a physician makes beside the sick-bed. (Sickness Unto
S Death, p. 142)

... there has lived no one and there lives no one outside
P of Christendom who is not in despair, and no one in
Christendom, unless he be a true Christian, and if he is
not quite that, he is somewhat in despair after all.
A This view ... is not depressing: on the contrary it is
uplifting, since it views every man in the aspect of the
highest demand made upon him, that he be spirit.
I (Sickness Unto Death, p. 155)

The Christian heroism (and perhaps it is rarely to be seen)
R is to venture wholly to be oneself, as an individual man,
this definite individual man, alone before the face of God,
alone in this tremendous responsibility ... (Sickness Unto
Death, p. 142)

... I would say that learning to know dread (angst) is an adventure which every man has to affront if he would not go to perdition either by not having known dread (angst) or by sinking under it. He therefore who has learned rightly to be in dread (angst) has learned the most important thing.

> If a man were a beast or an angel, he would not be able to be in dread (angst). Since he is a synthesis he can be in dread (angst) and the greater the dread (angst) the greater the man. (The Concept of Dread, p. 140)

A WHAT IS ANGST?

-- the alarming possibility of being able ... (Adam and
N every person) loves it and flees from it. (The Concept of Dread, p. 40)

G -- actually nothing but impatience. (Journals and Papers I, p. 41)

S -- a desire for what one fears, a sympathetic antipathy ... (Journals and Papers I, p. 39)

T -- (quoting Hamann) ... this impertinent disquiet, this holy hypochondria ... (Journals and Papers I, p. 39)

To suppose that anxiety (angst) is an imperfection merely betrays a strait-laced cowardice, since, to the contrary, the greatness of anxiety is the very prophet of the miracle of perfection, and inability to become anxious is a sign of one's being either an animal or an angel, which according to the teaching of scriptures, is less perfect than being a human being. (Journals and Papers I, p. 39)

## #3. Kierkegaard on the Aesthetic Stage and the Ethical Stage

### LIVING FOR PLEASURE (AESTHETIC STAGE) ENDS IN BOREDOM

If you marry, you will regret it; if you do not marry, you will also regret it .... Laugh at the world's follies, you will regret it; weep over them, you will also regret that .... Hang yourself, you will regret it; do not hang yourself, and you will also regret that .... My philosophy is at least easy to understand, for I have only one principle, and I do not even proceed from that .... I do not proceed from my principle; for if I did, I would regret it, and if I did not, I would also regret that. (Either/Or, Vol. 1, pp. 37-38)

Wine can no longer make my heart glad; a little of it makes me sad, much makes me melancholy. My soul is faint and impotent. (Either/Or, Vol. 1, p. 40)

The general remedy of those, who are uneasy without knowing the cause, is change of place; they are willing to imagine that their pain is the consequence of some local inconvenience, and endeavor to fly from it, as children from their shadows; always hoping for some more satisfactory delight from every new scene, and always returning home with disappointments and complaints .... (Samuel Johnson, The Rambler, #6)

I said to myself, "Come now, let me try you with pleasure and the enjoyment of good things." But behold, this too was vanity. I thought of beguiling myself with wine, I undertook great works, planted many fruit trees, amassed unheard of wealth. Nothing my eyes desired did I deny them. But at the end of it all behold it was vanity and a chase after wind. (freely paraphrased from Ecclesiastes 2: 1-11)

### BY CHOOSING - MAKING LASTING COMMITMENTS - PERSONALITY EMERGES (ETHICAL STAGE)

(This is how Judge Williams, a fictional character in the ethical stage, has to say:)

... if you have, or rather if you will will to have the requisite energy, you can win what is the chief thing in life, win yourself, acquire your own self .... The choice itself is decisive for the content of the personality, through the choice the personality immerses itself in the thing chosen, and when it does not choose it withers away in consumption. (Either/Or, vol. 2, p. 167)

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- There are many who set great store upon having seen one or another world-historical personality face to face. This impression they never forget, it has given to their souls

> an ideal picture which ennobles their nature; and yet such an instant, however significant, is nothing in comparison with the instant of choice. So when all has become still around one, as solemn as a starlit night, when the soul is alone in the whole world, then there appears before one, not a distinguished man, but the eternal Power itself. The heavens part, as it were, and the I chooses itself ... (Either/Or, vol. 2, p. 181)

#4. (For this session's handout, I distributed copies of pp. 32-45 of Philosophical Fragments. This contained Kierkegaard's celebrated story of the King and the maiden.)

#5a. Kierkegaard on Love

> It is generally considered that the emotions of a Romeo and a Juliet belong on the stage - in practical life one gets married three times. Similarly it is generally considered that the Christian requirements for what it means to exist ... belong in the pulpit - but in practical life it is madness. Yes, to be sure. But what is Christianity? Christianity is these very requirements executed in practical life: ergo, Christianity is madness. Christianity means that the ideal and ideality must be kept alive in practical life. (Journals and Papers I, p. 421)

> If I were a father or had responsibility for someone and gave an order and the person who should obey immediately went around saying that what I had said was beautiful, extraordinarily beautiful, so profoundly and supremely beautiful - I would say, "Go to blazes! Shut up and obey!" But this is the way certain orthodox people actually treat God and Christ - always this chatter about beautiful and beautiful, all this theatrical and festive dancing around. It seems to me that God and Christ must finally become weary of it and say, "Be human beings, period. Obey, fear, love, and none of this nonsense." (Journals and Papers I, p. 372)

> But God is love; therefore we can resemble God only in loving, just as, according to the apostle's words, we can only "be God's co-workers -- in love." (Works of Love, p. 74)

> Insofar as you love your beloved, you are not like unto God, for in God there is no partiality .... Insofar as you love

your friend, you are not like unto God, because before God, because before God there is no distinction. But when you love your neighbor, then you are like unto God. Therefore, go and do likewise. (*Works of Love*, pp. 74-75)

One's neighbour is one's equal. One's neighbour is not the beloved, for whom you have passionate preference, nor your friend, for whom you have passionate preference. Nor is your neighbour, if you are well educated, the well-educated person with whom you have cultural equality -- for with your neighbour you have before God equality of humanity. Nor is your neighbour one who is of higher social status than you, that is, insofar as he is of higher social status he is not your neighbour, for to love him because he is of higher status than you can very easily be preference and to that extent self-love. Nor is your neighbour one who is inferior to you, that is, insofar as he is inferior he is not your neighbour, for to love one because he is inferior to you can very easily be partiality's condescension and to that extent self-love. No, to love one's neighbour means equality. (*Works of Love*, p. 72)

*Worldly wisdom thinks that love is a relationship between man and man. Christianity teaches that love is a relationship between man - God - man, that is, that God is the middle term.* (*Works of Love*, pp. 112-113)

What the world honors and loves under the name of love is group-selfishness. (*Works of Love*, p. 123)

#5b. Kierkegaard Miscellany (at the end of the sessions, I couldn't resist handing out a little more information!)

It certainly would not be appalling that I should suffer punishment which I deserved because I had done wrong; but it would be appalling if I or any man should be able to do wrong and no one punished it. It would not be appalling that I should wake up in anxiety and horror to the deceit of my heart; it would be appalling if I or any man should be able to deceive his heart in such a way that no power could awaken it .... I will conduct myself at this moment as I consider best, but then I beseech you, O God, that, if I have acted wrongly, your declaration of punishment will not give me peace until I have realized my delusion, for it is not important that I go free but that the truth take place. (*Journals and Papers* I, p. 398)

> There is nothing of which every man is so afraid as getting to know how enormously much he is capable of. You are capable - do you want to know? - you are capable of living in poverty; you are capable of enduring almost all possible mistreatment, etc. But is it not true that you do not wish to get to know this; you would become enraged at the person who would tell you this, and regard as a friend only the one who helps you to confirm yourself in the idea "I am not capable of enduring, it is beyond my power, etc." (Journals and Papers I, p. 440)
>
> There is so much said now about people being offended at Christianity because it is so dark and gloomy, offended at it because it is so severe, etc. It is now high time to explain that the real reason why man is offended at Christianity is because it is too high, because its goal is not man's goal, because it would make of a man something so extraordinary that he is unable to get it into his head. (Sickness Unto Death, p. 214)
>
> And now for Christianity! Christianity teaches that this particular individual, and so every individual, whatever in other respects this individual may be, man, woman, serving-maid, minister of state, merchant, barber, student, etc. - this individual exists before God - this individual who perhaps would be vain for having once in his life talked with the King, this man who is not a little proud of living on intimate terms with that person or the other, this man exists before God, can talk with God any moment he will, sure to be heard by Him; in short, this man is invited to live on the most intimate terms with God! Furthermore, for this man's sake God came to the world, let himself be born, suffers and dies; and this suffering God almost begs and entreats this man to accept the help which is offered him! Verily, if there is anything that would make a man lose his understanding, it is surely this! (Sickness Unto Death, p. 216)
>
> "The single individual" -- with this category the cause of Christianity stands or falls .... (Journals and Papers II, p. 401)

## D. Collecting Feedback

A critical consideration in a project like this was how to collect feedback. Three methods were chosen: questionnaire, oral history, and personal observation.

## Questionnaire

The most obvious way to collect feedback was the questionnaire. It seemed important that my questionnaire contain specific questions about Kierkegaard's pastoral usefulness in terms of the four elements of the pastoral criterion--contemporary historical relevance, anthropocentricity (experiential), Christocentricity, and mystagogy. I was also anxious open-endedly to invite further comments, in case something significant was going on that I wasn't looking for and hadn't noticed.

A further consideration was an issue Professor Glock had raised in our conversation. People filling out questionnaires tend to respond the way they think the presenter wants them to. I attempted to dilute this tendency in three ways:

1. When the questionnaires were distributed I repeated several times that I was indifferent to their opinion of Kierkegaard. It wasn't important for the success of the project that they agree with him. It was only important that they think about it and be honest.
2. At the top of the questionnaire I gave them a chance to evaluate the process itself and me as a presenter. I hoped that this chance to discharge their personal feelings about me might encourage more candor in the evaluation of Kierkegaard.
3. I encouraged the participants to take the questionnaires home with them to answer, rather than filling them out there in front of me. A little time and space between themselves and me might help dispel their eagerness to please.

The final form of the questionnaire is as follows (with space between each question to permit expanded answers):

> I would deeply appreciate your taking time and thought to fill out this questionnaire. Please turn it in to the parish secretary or mail it to me (Mike Miller) at Box 247, Seaside, CA 93955.
>
> 1. As a presenter, I found Mike Miller (circle one)
>
> good adequate deficient
>
> 2. Considering the content given, I found the overall process
>
> good adequate deficient
>
> ---
>
> PLEASE ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS WITH ONE OF THESE EVALUATIONS:
>
> STRONGLY AGREE AGREE CAN'T SAY DISAGREE STRONGLY DISAGREE
>
> (If at all possible, explain and expand these answers with your own thoughts.)
>
> 1. I found Kierkegaard's theory a useful way of coming to grips with what Christianity is all about.
>
> 2. Kierkegaard's theory gave me a deeper sense of what is going on in my own life.
>
> 3. Kierkegaard's theory deals with burning questions that people today need to deal with.
>
> 4. Kierkegaard's theory gave me feelings of wonder, awe, fear about my own life and call to faith.
>
> 5. Do you understand Christianity and your call to be a Christian in a different way than you did before this process?
>
> YES NO
>
> Please explain.
>
> Name________________________________ Phone ______________
>
> Feel free to use other side for further comments.

## Oral History Technique

Oral history is a modern research technique whose main proponent is Willa Baum.[1] It consists in

> the tape-recording of reminiscences about which the narrator can speak from first-hand knowledge. Through pre-planned interviews, the information is captured in question and answer form by oral history interviewers.[2]

Oral history aims at acquiring not bare (objective facts but people's personal response to what happened, their "sometimes fragmentary and highly personal" impressions that can provide "a fund of color, detail, and incident...."[3]

There are special interviewing skills and techniques characteristic of this method. The interviewer should be someone who can sit quietly and listen, willing to let the narrator express ideas and opinions contrary to his own without needing to correct or educate him. He should be skilled at asking open-ended questions, questions that require more than a mere "yes" or "no." Besides having sufficient social skills to "draw people out" and put them at ease, he should be at peace with periods of silence. This gives the narrator a chance to collect his thoughts and perhaps contribute comething valuable that the interviewer would not have thought to ask about. The interviewer should keep a pad handy to write down key items. This will usually make the narrator feel honored and willing to be interviewed; it will also give him someplace to divert his eyes if some silence should arise.[1]

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[1] Her two books, Oral History for the Local Historical Society (Nashville, Tenn.: American Association for State and Local History, 1975 -- fifth edition) and Transcribing and Editing Oral History (Nashville, Tenn.: American Association for State and Local History, 1977), are the standard texts of the oral history movement.

[2] Willa Baum, Oral History for the Local Historical Society, p. 7.

[3] Ibid.

The oral history method seemed an excellent way to collect further, very personal feedback for the Kierkegaard project. I decided to use this method in two ways. First, I would educate myself in the proper techniques and request interviews with five randomly chosen people from each of the three contexts in which Kierkegaard was presented.

Second, I would train other people in oral history method and dispatch them to interview those same persons no sooner than a month later. These interviewers would explain that they were "doing research for the American Bishops on current adult education approaches," and have no visible connection with me. I was interested to see if these second interviews would yield a different kind of feedback than the former. I wondered whether the lapse of a month and an interviewer who wasn't the project's main presenter would affect the response.

The focus questions for the interview were these:

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[1] Ibid., pp. 27-35.

Name
Occupation
Why did you go to this process, retreat, series?
How did you like it in general?
Did any particular part of it have an important impact
  on you? Which part, and how?
Have you talked to anyone else about it since?
Did anything about it upset or annoy or intrigue you?
Do you understand the place of Jesus Christ in a different
  way than you did before: faith? sin? Anything at all?
Have you done any reading about Kierkegaard since the session?
Has Kierkegaard's picture of human development been of any
  use to you in coming to grips with your own life?
Do you think Kierkegaard's ideas could be effectively used
  by priests in sermons? By the church in its mission of
  proclaiming the Gospel?

Ample time was left between questions for the interviewer to contribute as he wanted. Also, the order and phrasing of the questions was varied from the first interview to the second.

## Personal Observation

The last source of feedback for this project was my own personal observations. I tried to observe the level of energy during and after each session, and what Kierkegaardian themes seemed to spark particular interest. Helpful in determining this were the quantity and quality of questions, comments, agreements, objections, etc. I recorded my impressions after each session.

It seemed that a combination of these three techniques -- questionnaire, oral history, and personal observation -- would provide sufficient feedback to reach an informed opinion about the pastoral usefulness of Kierkegaard's theory of human development.

# CHAPTER VI

## A PROJECT TO EXPLORE THE PASTORAL USEFULNESS OF KIERKEGAARD'S THEORY OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT: IMPLEMENTATION, FEEDBACK, CONCLUSION

Kierkegaard's theory of human development was presented to groups of people in three typical pastoral settings: a series of daily mass homilies, a retreat, and an adult education class. Project implementation and feedback in each of these settings will be considered separately.

The reporting of feedback involved difficulties. It was comparatively easy to summarize people's one word responses to the questionnaires, and to capsulize the drift of my own observations. Much more difficult, however, was finding the best way to report the feedback contained in the additional remarks people made on their questionnaires and that they volunteered in the oral history interviews. This feedback was so personal and richly subjective that it defied easy classification and summarization. In order to respect the integrity of this data, it was finally decided to introduce significant portions of it directly into the text and let it speak for itself.

### A. Project Implementation and Feedback: Homilies at Daily Mass

At first glance, homilies at Roman Catholic masses might seem a rather unwholesome context for subjectivity-oriented sessions on Kierkegaard. There is typically one speaker and many listeners, with no opportunity for questions, objections and other forms of give-and-take. Yet liturgy is the most typical (and quite often the only) setting in which Catholics can be exposed to religious instruction and "edification." In addition, a substantial prayer time leading into the homily period and flowing out from it certainly contributes a power of its own. In the liturgies involved, I, as the main celebrant, extemporized the presidential prayers and the introductory prayers of the faithful in line with the Kierkegaardian theme focused on. Appropriate scriptures were also chosen--most notably the scriptures at the beginning of each section of the working Kierkegaard paper treated earlier.

## Implementation

The place chosen for the series of Kierkegaard homilies and liturgies was Resurrection community in Aptos, California. I had been stationed there eight years earlier and still had connections. For two weeks previously, the Church bulletin carried this announcement:

> ### HOW CAN I BECOME A CHRISTIAN?
>
> Relentless, painful wrestling with this question led Danish thinker Soren Kierkegaard into a careful analysis of the times, a brilliantly painstaking examination of his own soul, and a shocking, jarring encounter with Jesus Christ which formed the content of his life. The reflections he left about "How can I become a Christian?" are among the most astonishing and provocative documents in Christian history.
>
> You have the chance to feel the sting of this self-styled "gadfly". From July 9-13, Fr. Mike Miller from

> St. Francis Xavier Church in Seaside will be celebrating daily mass and sharing some of Kierkegaard's vision. Fr. Miller was a deacon at Resurrection eight years ago and he also helped out here during the summers of 1976 and 1977. He is finishing up his doctoral dissertation on the value of Kierkegaard's writings for today's proclamation of the Gospel.
>
> Come at 9 a.m. on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday, and at 5:30 p.m. on Wednesday and learn more about Soren Kierkegaard, who has been the most influential writer in Fr. Miller's spiritual life.

The average weekday attendance at liturgy the previous week had been twenty-two; for the Kierkegaard series it was fifty-four! Attendants were typically one fifth young adults, two fifths housewives, and two fifths retired couples. After the first liturgy, at the insistence of at least half the congregation, discussion periods were scheduled to go over the various Kierkegaardian issues further. These groups met for one hour immediately following the liturgy on Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday. The lowest attendance at these get-togethers was twenty.

### Feedback: Questionnaires

Only a discouraging twelve questionnaires were returned. What was lacking in quantity, however, was more than made up for in quality. All but one of the respondents reported back much more than simple one word answers to the questions--in two cases filling extra sheets of paper with their remarks.

Some typical remarks were:

(Kierkegaard's theory gave me) ... a more logical view of what I feel has been occurring in my life. Now I have words and stages to explain my continuous search and the feeling that to stop is sin. MBP

I always knew we had a free will--but somehow felt we were told what we could and could not do. But I see without free will things become meaningless and we do have choices .... EO

I believe I have a great deal of ANGST and DESPAIR in my own life right now--"it's okay" and I pray I'll be able to keep on swimming and trust in the Lord that I'll be able to find some relief in taking the next step up. EW

It became a challenge or "dare" to be yourself, which can be a risky business, at the same time loving your neighbor, whoever it may be and understanding your Angst and despair and knowing that Jesus, too, lived on earth with these same feelings. And to imitate his life is to choose the Absolute absolutely. EW

The idea "Angst" was the high point of the lectures. AM

(Kierkegaard) strongly re-emphasizes the difficult uphill climb and frequent discouraging downhill slides we continuously face throughout our lives--and the desperate need we have for strong faith and total commitment to Christ! VMc

So it's the questions without answers that keep you growing spiritually. KA

(Kierkegaard's theory has made me) ... aware of changes in my life and aware of how much I have changed in the last two years particularly. But I see that I must push on because there's lots more work to do. PB

To me--Christianity is not a lone, personal (meaning just ME) path of life to eternity .... I find Kierkegaard's theory too depressing and too much of a struggle. I do not believe the good Lord intended that our way to Him be so "alone" and such a "struggle." ZC

Christianity is still such an awesome, elusive thing to me, that any time I succeed in understanding some part of it better, it is such a small inroad into its vastness, that I am not sure I will ever come to grips with it. (This is my frustration and my joy.) ... some of the ideas presented resonated with my own experience and helped me to explain to myself what had happened, when before I had not quite found the words yet. CL

The gist of the responses (in nutshell form) to the questionnaire is as follows:

1. I found Kierkegaard's theory a useful way of coming to grips with what Christianity is all about.

| | |
|---|---|
| strongly agree | 3 |
| agree | 6 |
| can't say | 2 |
| disagree | 1 |
| strongly disagree | 0 |

2. Kierkegaard's theory gave me a deeper sense of what is going on in my own life.

| | |
|---|---|
| strongly agree | 4 |
| agree | 4 |
| can't say | 0 |
| disagree | 3 |
| strongly disagree | 0 |
| no answer | 1 |

3. Kierkegaard's theory deals with burning questions that people today need to deal with.

| | |
|---|---|
| strongly agree | 6 |
| agree | 4 |
| can't say | 1 |
| disagree | 0 |
| strongly disagree | 0 |
| no answer | 1 |

4. Kierkegaard's theory gave me feelings of wonder, awe, fear about my own life and call to faith.

| | |
|---|---|
| strongly agree | 1 |
| agree | 5 |
| can't say | 0 |
| * disagree | 6 |
| strongly disagree | 0 |

*(Three of these respondents explained that they had these feelings already and therefore did not get them from Kierkegaard.)

5. Do you understand Christianity and your call to be a Christian in a different way than you did before this process?

| | |
|---|---|
| yes | 3 |
| * no | 7 |
| unanswered | 2 |

*(Two of these respondents explained that they had reached a similar understanding of Christianity previously, although they appreciated Kierkegaard's new terminology.)

Feedback: Oral History Technique (five people interviewed by me)

Some significant remarks, transcribed from tape, follow.

Patricia B., fifty-eight years old and a business accountant, shared this:

> (Kierkegaard's stages) seemed very familiar. I really felt that I was taking these different levels, and just didn't realize it till I heard you .... I tried to locate myself in the stages and had a hard time .... (The most positive thing I got from the Kierkegaard presentations was) ... a feeling that I was on the right track. I really felt that he had a good theory. What he was saying has been happening in my life, and if he's right I feel I'm on the right track .... Some people living on the surface of the Christian movement might not know what you're talking about. But for those really trying to get into it, really trying to grow, I think this Kierkegaard might be really helpful.

Kathleen L., twenty-four years old and a secretary, shared this:

> I did find the stages helpful in looking in my own life. I think the transfer from the pleasure to the ethical--I think that has been kind of apparent in my life because for a long time, I know I really got messed up .... I had gone into yoga, nutrition, many different ways to get to happiness, or health or whatever I was looking for .... I've gone through a lot of things in life. I'm sure I was looking for something ....

When I first discovered in myself the Will, the power to choose, that was a big thing for me. I had gone through lots of depression. When I discovered I had something to say about the matter, I could go with my feelings or against them--that was a very big thing .... And yet, on the other hand, even with will, I discovered I didn't always have the power to do what I wanted. And that was almost even worse. It was like admitting that I couldn't do it all on my own. At first I thought I could do everything ... but I found I couldn't. All that happened in therapy. And then I discovered I really needed something beyond me to enable me to get to where I was going .... As I start trying to conform my life around living according to the Gospel, there's a different kind of order in my life than there was before. I could never see beyond what I wanted in the stage before.

There are so many aspects to Christianity. It's frustrating because I can't seem to accept anybody's system, so that somehow I'm going to come up with my own system .... I don't plan to accept the whole thing (Kierkegaard's theory) because he says so. On the other hand, you said enough things that struck me that I don't feel I can really ignore Kierkegaard. Somehow I have to find out more about it and what he says.

Zedmere C., sixty-three years old and retired, shared this:

(Did you try to apply Kierkegaard's stages to yourself?) I don't apply anything to myself. I'm me. I would just take it seriously if I thought it could help me .... From what I perceived, Kierkegaard makes Christianity a purely individual quest and struggle. To me it's not completely individual. I feel that everybody is involved as I work towards Christianity. It isn't "I", it's "we". I love the present church emphasis on community; we pray together, sing together, hold hands together. It's beautiful. It's the way it should be .... There are some people who just don't think there's been an accomplishment, a full accomplishment, unless they themselves have done it. Now there are all kinds of people in the world, and for some it (Kierkegaard's theory) may be helpful, but for me it wasn't .... I spoke with my daughter Colltee a lot about the presentations. She has really encouraged me to do a lot of thinking on my own, and to stop being brain-washed. Now I don't believe things because they've been presented to me by the Church. My faith now comes from inside out.

> It has to be you. We can't all have it to the same degree, the same way. We're all different. So it has to be personal as far as that's concerned.

Valerie Mc., forty-eight years old and a social worker with the handicapped, shared this:

> (I tried to locate myself on Kierkegaard's stages) and I really had a difficult time. I felt at different times like I was in each of them .... I guess I have a problem with really liking myself. I'm always thinking I should be doing better. But you said too that this might be that angst and despair. I had thought it might be a gift somehow .... I think maybe without them I wouldn't have grown .... Kierkegaard's theory puts human growth in a realistic way. His different words gave me a new perspective on maturity from conformity to being a human individual .... I enjoyed the different terminology. It gave a sort of new perspective on experiences that people had already gone through and were aware of .... I appreciated being helped to think about this in terms of my own life, my own inner self, and thinking about what steps one should take to progress further .... I talked to quite a few people about it (Kierkegaard's theory) -- shared notes with my daughter and some friends .... I plan to do some more reading in Kierkegaard.

Eleanor W., fifty-two years old and a retired secretary going back to school, shared this:

> (Did you attempt to situate your self in terms of the theory?) Yes. (Did the sessions help you understand anything about your own life that you'd never understood before?) Oh, definitely. Particularly that angst and despair. That restless feeling that comes over you every so often. That helped me understand myself a lot .... It made me think, just to try to figure out answers to those questions of "where are you?" .... I talked with a few people (about it) there in the room. And sometimes before the service there'd be a chance to discuss what was on the blackboard, your little diagram there ....

I found these interview sessions most encouraging. In their own way, each of the narrators had been genuinely intrigued or unsettled by Kierkegaard's theory of human development. In addition, being asked their opinion and their input probably deepened the learning experience for them. They were all extremely cooperative.

Feedback: Oral History Technique (five people interviewed by a third and unrelated party)

In order to see if the previous narrators would hold the same opinions after the passage of a month, and in the presence of a different interviewer from the project's main presenter, a third person (Mary Bernice Piazza of Boulder Creek, California) asked them questions "on behalf of an inquiry group of the American bishops." Some significant remarks, transcribed from tape, follow.

> Pat C.: ... (the Kierkegaard process) did have the impact .... Since I've been about thirty or thirty-five years old I've tried to grow and change .... Kierkegaard showed me that at least I'm headed in the right direction .... I just really was intrigued--in my simple mind what he was saying was so simple to me .... It just hit me. I'm going in the right direction .... I expect to do some reading (of Kierkegaard) later when I have some real time on my hands.
>
> Kathleen L.: I really liked it (the Kierkegaard series) .... I enjoyed having something to think about ... something a little deeper than you usually get .... I found it was another way to approach God .... There are so many ideas that come in that I have to filter through and figure out my own way ... and I found another route I could go .... (Kierkegaard said some things) that resonate with me, but it's not the everlasting only way. But I think it will be useful and I plan to do some more reading and doing something about it. I can't just drop it ... there's

something in there for me--I know from the presentation--but what it is or where it will lead I can't say .... I started reading one of his books--I can't remember the title--I haven't got into it real deep .... (Kierkegaard) helped me see some things that did happen in my past. ... it's always neat for me when I can kind of classify experiences I had ... and have a way of looking at them. It happens in some of the areas like the aesthetic dimension and the ethical .... Probably one thing that I liked most was something I read (at mass) one day. Mike asked me to read it--it was an excerpt from Philosophical Fragments that Kierkegaard had written. When Mike Miller came to talk to me he brought me a copy of it and I was reading it over. It was the point about the gentleness of God and how he doesn't want to crush people and he gives the freedom to choose and doesn't want to destroy (them) ....

Valerie Mc.: I loved the series. I found it a very different use of words and new ideas, a new sort of concept, a way of looking at religion and what we are striving for .... (The different words) made different ideas come to your mind or different ways that you could go about striving to become more Christ-like in your life .... I would say it was just different word-terminology that makes it fit better in our society .... I wish it could have been longer .... I've re-read a number of things from Fr. Mike and I'm going to go to some of Kierkegaard's books .... I wrote on someone's cast: "The opposite of sin is Faith." He said "That's very interesting," and it made him think .... I've discussed it with my family and a number of friends. (The thing that stands out in my mind about the Kierkegaard series was) Mike's use of his chart (showing the levels of human development) ... it really started to stick in my mind.

Zedemer C.: As we went through the series I began to form my opinion of the depth of depression and unhappiness of this man and his whole format ... I didn't like it. It made me uneasy because it just wasn't the way I looked at things .... It discouraged me .... I discussed it frequently with my daughter. We've had some great discussions about it .... I can't say he (Kierkegaard) has a place in today's world ... I didn't accept any of this teaching. I can associate with him maybe thirty-five or forty years ago--I was going through terrible struggles at the time and I might have had a deeper association (with Kierkegaard) .... At that time I was still in the

> older teaching .... I think (Kierkegaard) destroys the Christian spirit we have now developed especially among Catholics .... We've come out of the closed places, we are living now among other Christians .... We need to help each other! That lone trip ... I don't ever want to go back to that .... I went back one time and tried to pick up his (Kierkegaard's) train of thought. I couldn't even remember his name for a while there. After the series I placed him right out. He was too depressing. I placed him right out of my life, and then a few weeks later I had reason to question in my mind and so I did. Yes. I went to the library ... and told the girl I wanted something on Kierkegaard. I sat down and read it for a while and I thought, well it hasn't changed--I remember it now--and that was it.
>
> Eleanor W: His (Kierkegaard's) discussion of angst was really intriguing .... I'd love to have it elaborated on with a few more examples. The final step where we reach God--I would like to have it described more fully .... I'd like to have the whole thing elaborated on .... I've never heard that particular step-by-step way to reach God ... it was intriguing .... To me there was a lot of psychology in Kierkegaard .... It helped me immediately, helped me to understand what I was going through .... If it helped me to understand myself better, then it's certainly beneficial.

I was relieved and delighted to discover no great discrepancy between information people had shared with me and what they shared with this third and "uninvolved" interviewer. It implied that the feedback was accurate.

## Feedback: My Personal Observations

There were many indications that exposure to Kierkegaard's theory of human development was a powerful experience for this group of people. For one thing, attendance at the weekday masses rose to more than double the usual number and remained at that level throughout the week. The high level of interest manifested itself in the request for discussion sessions and the twenty plus that came each time. The quantity and quality of questions at these sessions was striking. The energy level was high throughout. The two items that seemed to arouse the most intrigue and unsettlement were Kierkegaard's concept of angst and the notion of various stages on the way to selfhood. There was also a good exchange on the relationship of "individual" and "community".

## B. Project Implementation and Feedback: Three Day Retreat

The last ten years have seen a dramatic increase of interest in retreats among Catholics. Retreat houses that had spent years teetering on the brink of closure now find themselves booked months in advance. Retreats are an excellent context for in depth pastoral experience.

If care is not taken, however, they can also be excellent contexts for group manipulation. People thrown into very close quarters, removed from familiar surroundings, can become "processed", succumbing to a stampede effect that doesn't respect or involve their freedom.

In the retreat context I was particularly anxious to "be Kierkegaardian in presenting Kierkegaard," as Professor Snyder had urged. Participants were encouraged to chime right in as questions or objections occurred to them. There was a special time set aside after each presentation for this purpose as well. At these times there was typically vigorous discussion around a wide variety of viewpoints.

In addition, plenty of silence between each session was encouraged. The relation between freedom and silence is well-acknowledged in social control strategies. In a fascinating article in Commonweal, "Liturgical Silence," J. Patrick Dobel writes:

> A few years ago a television program depicted an anti-utopia where society was forced underground and every place except the rulers' living quarters had piped-in music. The music was finely modulated to maximize the efficiency of the function the people were supposed to be performing, be it sleep, work, wake-up, or patriotic activities. 'Muzak' at shops and piped-in music at offices and factories are designed by industrial psychologists to short-circuit thought and influence behavior in certain patterns. Any social organization which seeks control over life fills life with song, dance, constant community activity and group discussion. Solitary time to quietly and calmly reflect is too dangerous to continued adherence to community norms. It is easier to create a visceral orthodoxy through emotional and behavioral manipulation than to give free range to the mysteries of silence.[1]

I was anxious to give people enough silence from me and from each other to exercise independent free consideration of Kierkegaard on their own.

Advertisement for the retreat, which lasted from Friday evening at 6 p.m. to Sunday afternoon at 12 noon, was identical (except for place and date) with that put out for the Kierkegaard masses (see preceding section). The retreat took place at St. Francis Retreat Center, San Juan Bautista, California on July 20-23, 1979. Eighteen people attended.

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[1] Cf. August 3, 1979 issue, p. 431.

### Feedback: Questionnaires

All but two of the eighteen participants at the retreat turned in questionnaires--an extraordinary response. More impressive than the quantity of the returns was their quality. All but three responded to the questions with more than the suggested one-word answers. In fact, twelve felt the need to continue their reflections on the back of the questionnaire, and three (a doctor, a teacher and a secretary) continued their replies on a surprising total of twelve single-space typed pages!

Some typical responses were:

> My training as a sociologist has taught me that man is a social animal and destined to be shaped by the larger culture surrounding him. Kierkegaard presents the challenge to rise above that predestined state of pleasure fulfillment. On the way back to Fresno I was struck by the similarities between Kierkegaard's stages and Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs which of course stops before the theological plane by placing self-actualization at the top. I think that probably the greatest change in my personal theology was realized by the idea that we don't achieve salvation by lulling ourselves into a blissful state of Nirvana .... I feel a greater sense of guilt about not standing more apart from the multitude, but this is a constructive and evolving guilt rather than a destructive self-defeating one .... (Kierkegaard) did present a sobering attitude towards sin seldom encountered today .... Also, I was enthralled by the notion that anxiety could be a gift from God. RD

(Kierkegaard) made me realize that I can't just drift along feeling that because I don't do anything too bad I am a good Christian .... I see now that going to Mass & Communion most every day is not nearly enough to even push me out of the Aesthetic Stage .... I think I have been deluding myself with complacency as to my true commitment to God. BJ

Too often Christianity is "pie in the sky" instead of the down to earth reality of every day living. My first reaction (to Kierkegaard) was uncomfortable (not lifted up), but (he) made me understand my angst, despair and restlessness not as evil and destructive, but as a necessary part of growth .... To be content is to stay still. FG .

I see in Kierkegaard's theories the same steps I took to build myself towards the higher goals. However, I found it hard to read what Kierkegaard was writing, since I find his writing more to the very learned .... I was already using the same steps toward God .... We have been doing this for years before we heard of Kierkegaard. I can thank God I learned this before I heard of Kierkegaard, but I do have a deep feeling for this man, as he certainly makes you think deeper into yourself. I wish I could know him better. MK

I felt as if the theory left me dangling. Almost as if it were left incomplete. If my understanding is correct, I am left uncomfortable with his theory because he makes the goal of true Christianity seem so unattainable .... To study Kierkegaard may be a very good thing for theologians or for those with highly developed minds. However, I wonder if the masses are ready for such hard, lofty ideals. I have to say that I do like the thought of relating absolutely to the Absolute and relatively to the relative; however, I again must wonder if it is really meant for the masses .... I understand more fully that it is not enough to be kind and good .... Anyone could be those without being a Christian .... I would have to say the feelings I was left with were discomfort and confusion .... The emptiness we feel whenever we feel despair is always hunger for Jesus, but tunnel vision trained only on Christ is a very hard row to hoe .... I will have to live with all of this for a while before I truly know if (Kierkegaard) has had any lasting effects on my approach to Christianity. Mike: in all charity I would have liked to answer differently than I did, but I am sure you want nothing short of the truth. PK

(Kierkegaard's) emphasis on relationship and personhood and the incredible inconceivable reality of the Incarnation allowed me to be experientally aware, during the retreat, of the reality of HOPE. Hope as grace, a theological virtue; not the hope placed in science, technology, ideologies, law, health or even friendships, but truly Christian HOPE .... Achievements, political involvements, study of philosophy and history, affairs, a brief legal marriage, divorce--so many "wrong" decisions on my part, yet the spirit kept working, shaping me and even tormenting me making me finally aware of my total need for the Lord and His community. And to know that the despair, the sin of self-centeredness is forgiven when I step out in faith to say yes to Jesus! ... People have to become persons, not just statistics .... I've emphasized in my life rationality, control, science and even I guess accepted a scientific naturalism as a faith substitute. It has been and still is very important for me to know--understand--intellect is important. But for a long time this "head trip" was actually as I see it now the source of despair (sin) in that I overvalued rationality and on that basis rejected Christianity. (I much admired Shaw's witticism against Christianity.) But the wholeness of life is not limited to the intellect but in relationship and in relationship to the incredible and inconceivable reality of the Incarnation. This relationship reverses the categories of human life and thought totally and calls for the New Creation now. MM

Since I am an older person, while you gave this lecture it really reviewed my life (sic) and made me think of many of the situations I had passed through .... I have three children ... and I can see them in their different steps .... It seems like (Kierkegaard) did not include himself in society at all--and in today's teaching in the church we are being taught so much about how important the community is that it was kind of a "throwback" to some of our old ways of thinking. I probably should take some time to read more about Kierkegaard .... MC

K's theory allows me to look at Christianity from another angle ... the tremendous gap between God and myself, between what He expects of me and how narrow my expectations are of myself .... His theory that restlessness is a gift was, to me, a relief because of the tremendous pull, anxiety, and struggling I have been wrestling with these past few

> years .... Maybe I have never analyzed the feeling of incompleteness, longing, hungering for God .... Certainly, I know I am a sinner. But maybe this declaration has been superficial and churchy, made by a rule follower, a Christian Groupy of the Present Age .... K. helps me realize that I have not yet been the person God has called me to be .... It doesn't seem that many of us get beyond the Aesthetic Stage .... I am still overcome with the fact that God has loved me so much for so long, even when I am furthest from being my true self. AM

The gist of the responses (in nutshell form) to the questionnaires are as follows:

1. I found Kierkegaard's theory a useful way of coming to grips with what Christianity is all about.

| | |
|---|---|
| strongly agree | 8 |
| agree | 5 |
| can't say | 2 |
| disagree | 1 |
| strongly disagree | 0 |

2. Kierkegaard's theory gave me a deeper sense of what is going on in my own life.

| | |
|---|---|
| strongly agree | 7 |
| agree | 7 |
| can't say | 1 |
| disagree | 1 |
| strongly disagree | 0 |

3. Kierkegaard's theory deals with burning questions that people today need to deal with.

| | |
|---|---|
| strongly agree | 6 |
| agree | 10 |
| can't say | 0 |
| disagree | 0 |
| strongly disagree | 0 |

4. Kierkegaard's theory gave me feelings of wonder, awe, fear about my own life and call to faith.

| | |
|---|---|
| strongly agree | 4 |
| agree | 7 |
| can't say | 2 |

| | |
|---|---|
| disagree | 2 |
| strongly disagree | 0 |
| unanswered | 1 |

5. Do you understand Christianity and your call to be a Christian in a different way than you did before this process?

| | |
|---|---|
| yes | 9 |
| no | 5 |
| unanswered | 2 |

Feedback: Oral History Technique (five people interviewed by me)

Some significant remarks, transcribed from tape, follow.

Marilyn W., forty-four years old and an unemployed teacher, shared this:

> I needed to accept my restlessness and give meaning to it. Kierkegaard's theory gave me a deeper sense of what's going on. I've always felt a restlessness, and as I get older I think it grows instead of subsides and so ... (Kierkegaard's theory) made me feel like it wasn't just me. (The restlessness) was part of living, it was part of being a Christian, you know, like St. Augustine. We hear those words (of St. Augustine "We are restless until we find our rest in God."), and we know it, but then we see other people and we think something's wrong. I've never had the kind of faith that makes me just feel good ... I never had all those highs other people (like Pentecostals and Cursillistas) did, and I always wanted more. I was never satisfied .... On the retreat I felt almost an antagonism with those people who were saying, "This Kierkegaard is depressing. I've always felt good after retreats, and I don't feel good." I thought, "Dammit, that's what it's all about! It's supposed to zero in deeply so that we are restless Christians ...." It's kind of nice knowing that this fellow was not Catholic. He wasn't molded the way we all are molded and yet he has much to tell us.

Virginia G., sixty-five years old and a radiology technician, shared this:

> I feel more sure of my faith .... For instance, I have contact with people who are really into the charismatic movement ... but I don't feel the way they do. I mean I don't feel like this gung-ho thing .... The thing that really impressed me was angst. I'd never looked at it like that before. I've been thinking about getting some of (Kierkegaard's) books .... I think a lot of people wouldn't accept (Kierkegaard's approach). So many people--it's like the charismatic thing--they're just so sure (of themselves) that to tell them they'd ever be anxious about their faith--they would think you were crazy!

Barbara J., sixty years old and a homemaker, shared this:

> (Did you try to identify yourself in terms of Kierkegaard's stages?) Well, I did really. I don't think I'm very high up on the scale, though .... I think that I need to improve .... I wouldn't have (thought so) before, but I do now, after your class. I really do, and I can see myself down there struggling. But you know, I think I have a tendency to be complacent. I don't like anything that upsets my life .... I don't like anything that's not sort of nice--and this is a bad way to be .... I discussed it (Kierkegaard's theory) with Virginia and Eleanor and talked about it with Betty Smith .... I think it's been a big help for me in my life. Because, like I say, I was just sort of stagnating .... I think this is the sort of thing that we should hear more about .... I think we need to be stirred up.

Frances K., fifty-nine years old and a homemaker, shared this:

> I thought I'd gotten past the present age .... I was hopeful that I was at the ethical, but I don't think you can ever say you're any place securely .... That's what I liked about the whole thing. It wasn't just handed to you. You had to figure things out .... I was very tired when I went on that retreat, and I'd been through a period of depression, ... I suppose you would say restlessness, and I thought it was wrong. I thought, "there's nothing wrong that I (should) feel this way." And then this made me think, "Well, that's part of your growth ...." At first I thought, "Oh, all I want is a little peace and quiet in my old age; I don't want any more angst; I'm tired ... did I come here to be anxious?" So my first reaction was quite negative and then I started thinking

> about it and I thought, "this is helpful." ... People are looking for an escape and Christianity isn't escape, it isn't an escape from everyday living .... Actually, you can't follow Christ without the cross .... A lot of people might resent (Kierkegaard's picture of faith) because it's not what they're looking for .... They're looking for something that's peaceful and beautiful .... People that are against religion say it's an opiate for the people, but I think a lot of times that's what people are looking for .... (Kierkegaard's) theory has more reality. That's what life is all about. It's not something sweet and lovely.

Paul C., fifty years old and a teacher, shared this:

> I like the concept of Kierkegaard of leaping. That's pretty difficult, but I think essential to where I am. Less of the intellectualizing, less of the apologia kind of stuff and more back to basic ... trust in Christ .... I've talked with my wife and a friend about it .... (I liked Kierkegaard because of) the fact that there's a framework .... I think in those terms. I tend to think in steps, I tend to be quite linear in my thought process and so those things were very nicely put .... I think the real clarity was in the angst--it was really more psychological but I think that's part of being a Christian too. I felt a sense of relief in that discussion. I felt a sense of "I actually am not different from my fellow human beings." .... the thing that caused me the most difficulty was in the commitment thing because I don't think I really had a good idea what that was.

I found these interview sessions very encouraging. In their own way (as in the masses interviews) each of the narrators had been genuinely intrigued or unsettled by Kierkegaard's theory of human development. The rich levels of individuality defy easy classification, but each one had been stimulated. Being asked their opinion and their outlook probably deepened the learning experience. They were all anxious to cooperate.

**Feedback:** Oral History Technique (five people interviewed by a third and unrelated party)

In order to see if the previous narrators would hold the same opinions after the passage of a month, and in the presence of a different interviewer from the project's main presenter, a third person (Bonnie Gartshore of Pacific Grove, California) interviewed them on behalf of "an inquiry group of the American bishops." Some significant remarks, transcribed from tape, follow.

> Marilyn W.: I felt it was like a crash course and I would like to go back and at leisure time read him. You really had to think a lot about what you received; it wasn't a light retreat .... One thing I got out of the discussions was a definition of sin .... Sin is not being a whole self. And I really like that definition ... and I can understand it. Because that is sin, isn't it--not being a full self .... The handouts were a little heady, but they followed the lecture. They solidified it. I liked Mike's presentations, but I wish he had been a little more directive in the discussion periods. Sometimes I feel we got way off the track.
>
> Virginia G.: I enjoyed it (the process) immensely. The whole thing was really great .... I can't remember too much what his ideas of sin were--I can't remember now what it was. (Did the picture of human development help you come to grips better with your own life?) Not really, because anything he had to say I've sort of gone along with for years anyway. I would certainly hope that they have more of these retreats. I think people want something more.
>
> Barbara J.: I certainly wasn't disappointed (with the retreat). I found it all inspiring. I've talked to the people who were there, and I've told other people about it. Some people miss so much, but they won't budge .... I really do feel closer to God after this experience. I think my faith has deepened. As for sin, he reminded us that sin is still there, even though today we seem to be de-emphasizing it .... I've read over what he (Mike) gave us to refresh my memory and reinforce what I learned ....

> I feel that I was at a changing point in my life at the time of the class and retreat. This was all very helpful to me.
>
> Frances K.: In general, I did like it (the retreat). At the first session I was very depressed. I think everyone was depressed .... I was tired when I went there; I went there for a rest and this just got me all stirred up .... I was very annoyed. After all, at my age all I want is peace and quiet, and then I realized that after really listening to it that there's no growth without moving up to a higher stage. He gave four stages (sic) ... of development in your spiritual life and to progress from the present up to a higher spiritual plane you really have to ... be restless and not be placid .... Yes, it has been helpful. I realize that being anxious isn't wrong. I thought, "Oh, if I'm anxious there's something I'm doing wrong," but it isn't wrong to be anxious. Anxious really isn't a very good interpretation of the word angst, I don't think, but that's the only English word ... I think it's more "stirred up" maybe .... I think an awful lot of people would not like it (Kierkegaard's theory). I mean, so many people do want comfort .... I think that's what most people are looking for .... When you really meditate on this it does give you comfort, but at first thinking, it's very disturbing.
>
> Paul C.: I got the aesthetic -- I thought that was clear. And the religious--that was good. But it was the middle one that was giving me some concern. Maybe that's where I am, but I wasn't too sure what that was--because I don't think I've ever done that consciously .... I don't think I made that conscious commitment. That's not to say that when I asked my wife to marry me I didn't know what I was getting into--I wanted a commitment, but I didn't think of it in that kind of a sense .... I thought Kierkegaard was great. I liked his idea of angst, and the need to trust anyway and jump on ahead.

I was glad that there were no serious contradictions between information the narrators had given Bonnie Garthsore and the information they had given me. Some slight contrast is visible in at least one case, due to "forgetfulness." Consistency between the two different oral history feedbacks suggests they are accurate.

## Feedback: My Personal Observations

With the exception of the first night's presentation ("The Present Age") when people seemed tired and distracted, I sensed an enormous amount of energy throughout the retreat. The Kierkegaard presentations were characteristically interrupted by people anxious to offer examples, ask questions, or bring up side issues. The discussion periods following each session were lively and often penetrated to the heart of substantive issues. The week's biggest energies seemed concentrated around Kierkegaard's idea of *angst* (Everybody was delighted to discover it was a sign of health to be anxious!), *sin* (several people were openly shocked at how trivial their past understanding of sin had been), and the Incarnation (God's love for people who are not yet selves, and the importance of our choosing and clinging to the paradox absolutely). Several people also were intrigued by the idea that someone had actually measured out stages in the spiritual life.

## C. Project Implementation and Feedback: Adult Education Class

The third typical pastoral setting in which Kierkegaard's theory of human development was presented was an adult education class. The class situation is not ideal for presenting Kierkegaard. Few environments invite passivity or detached discussion of "the objective matter presented" like a "class." People often come to classes with the intention of sitting quietly and learning from someone else. The lack of passion or involvement is the very antithesis of what Kierkegaard is all about!

In order to minimize this danger, I attempted as much as possible to be conversational in tone; ask lots of questions; and invite people's feedback, examples, remarks, pros and cons, etc. I also included occasional silences to give people a chance to come to grips inwardly with some of the ideas presented, free from outside pressure from me or their fellows. Sessions typically began with a scripture reading and ended with one of Kierkegaard's prayers, both read by participants.

## Implementation

The adult education class was offered at Sacred Heart Parish, Salinas, California, on five consecutive Tuesday evenings from late July through August of 1979. Advertisement, taking the same basic form as that for the Kierkegaard masses in Aptos (except for details of place and time), was put out in the three local parish bulletins.

Since summer is a time of slow parish activity and vacations, I did not expect a large turnout. I was hoping for a steady attendance of 15--the minimum size from which to gather decent feedback. To my delight, the average attendance at the sessions was 41!

## Feedback: Questionnaire

A very considerable twenty-five questionnaires were returned. Of these, only three confined themselves to one word responses--the great majority expounded their ideas and feelings freely. Two people needed extra pages to contain their remarks. One of these, a local judge, filled eight and a half further pages with reactions. There was even a prophecy, turned in from a local charismatic!

Some typical remarks were:

> Kierkegaard's theory equates becoming a fee person with becoming a Christian. Christianity demands a free adult choice on the part of an individual .... I heard expressed many interior "happenings" that I'd never been able to verbalize .... Above all, we need to "grow up" concerning our relationship with Jesus .... Jesus stands with open arms and says that your sins are forgiven. "You can only be sure of my love. Keep swimming!" PO

> Kierkegaard presented many arguments that, to me, tended to lead one away from the Church, at least at the start. It troubled me a bit to find that I agreed with most of the ideas he had .... I might disagree with some of the establishment's ideas about life. (In this case the establishment is the Church.) Kierkegaard would say stand up and be counted for what you believe. Take a stand! Decide for your self! But I say, what does the Lord do with those who take positions opposite to those of his Church? A question to ponder, indeed! I see now that being a Christian is more a struggle than a cruise down the river on an innertube. It's an ongoing battle with the toughest of opponents: oneself. BS

> There is a "down to earth" quality in Kierkegaard that I now admire .... As so poignantly presented, there is the "Present Age" syndrome that is so revolting, the crudities and shallow following of current drivel and patterns .... KN

> I dare not call myself a Christian. I don't have the right stuff. DP

I could really see where I myself was lacking and a lot of places that I need to work on. It's so easy to become lazy and complacent. We need to be shook up once in a while and I think Kierkegaard does that: he brings us face to face with ourselves. I feel I really need to work harder at it than I have been. LS

I strongly feel that the Angst and despair he talks about are a gift from God to lead us to choose Christ--to hold out a hand and walk with him .... Christianity is, in my opinion, the hardest religion offered to man--that freedom that makes choosing God so painful, so exciting also makes it difficult for us to deal with because it really goes against the way so many of us were brought up. NF

I can look back on my own life and see the searching, restlessness and even despair I was feeling on my way to knowing Christ, although I wouldn't have labeled it as such at the time. In the religious stage, I definitely feel peace, defined as "the consolation of knowing what I'm choosing is right." I also feel inner suffering, realizing the more I become Christ-like, the farther I have to go. I now better understand the value of this discomfort; if I wasn't conscious of my weakness, I wouldn't have much desire to grow .... I am having trouble with Kierkegaard's theory in that it would seem that one must have been through such a lengthy process to even be considered for heaven that it leaves little room for kids. NH

...with the information about Kierkegaard's theory I don't feel so awkward. I always thought that happiness and fulfillment should be simply complete peace of mind (tranquillity), but I realize now that it is more complex. These sessions provided me with encouragement and confidence. A big part of this development was Kierkegaard's theory. But, also, I think I was ripe for new insights. Indeed it is thrilling to realize that frustrations, disappointments, struggles (even sinning!), and angst can actually stimulate one to grow. JP

(Kierkegaard) deals with sin in a positive and healthy way and describes it as "despair". ... (I like) the very exciting concept that only as an individual do I have importance in the eyes of God and that I approach God

> only if I make more personal commitments and decisions and act on them. RS

> I identified with "angst" although I don't consider myself a passionate person .... I desire to be a Christian (don't consider myself one) .... I admire Christ ... I don't copy, but I do want to copy. Kierkegaard wouldn't like me! GG

The gist of the responses (in nutshell form) to the questionnaire is as follows:

1. I found Kierkegaard's theory a useful way of coming to grips with what Christianity is all about.

| | |
|---|---|
| strongly agree | 3 |
| agree | 12 |
| can't say | 3 |
| disagree | 5 |
| strongly disagree | 0 |
| no answer | 2 |

2. Kierkegaard's theory gave me a deeper sense of what is going on in my own life.

| | |
|---|---|
| strongly agree | 7 |
| agree | 9 |
| can't say | 4 |
| disagree | 4 |
| strongly disagree | 0 |
| no answer | 1 |

3. Kierkegaard's theory deals with burning questions that people today need to deal with.

| | |
|---|---|
| strongly agree | 8 |
| agree | 13 |
| can't say | 0 |
| disagree | 1 |
| strongly disagree | 0 |
| no answer | 3 |

4. Kierkegaard's theory gave me feelings of wonder, awe, fear about my own life and call to faith.

| | |
|---|---|
| strongly agree | 5 |
| agree | 13 |

| | |
|---|---|
| can't say | 0 |
| disagree | 2 |
| strongly disagree | 1 |
| no answer | 4 |

5. Do you understand Christianity and your call to be a Christian in a different way than you did before this process?

| | |
|---|---|
| yes | 14 |
| *no | 7 |
| no answer | 4 |

*(Two of these respondents explained that they had already reached a similar understanding of Christianity.)

### Feedback: Oral History Technique (five people interviewed by me)

Some significant remarks, transcribed from tape, follow.

Raymond S., forty-nine years old and a judge, shared this:

> (Kierkegaard's) statements about angst as an adventure--that really struck--angst is an adventure. We keep thinking it's a negative thing, fight against it, "Leave me in my rut; I don't want to have this problem, this anxiety. Leave me alone." And yet, it's a call to adventure, it's a call to step out .... I've heard someone say that the difference between a Christian and a non-Christian is that the Christian knows he's a sinner and the non-Christian doesn't .... As long as I'm in despair i'm not doing everything right .... I can't be judged on the merits of the people I'm around. If I hang around with Christians all the time, that doesn't make me a Christian .... I've still got to step out someplace along the way and say, "Hey, this is me. I am me .... This is what I stand for." Unless I do that, I'm nothing. I'm way back in the present age again. It's difficult to stand and say, "Hey, this is what I stand for," because you never know all the facts. If you do it with human thinking, you'd never be able to do it; you have to do it on faith, knowing that God loves you so much he's not going to let you fall. And if you do, or think you do, you really haven't fallen, because all things work together for the good of those who believe in God.

Dennis H., thirty-six years old and a veterinarian, shared this:

> I can see how I can kind of plug myself into the stages. I don't know how it applies to other people ... but it did make sense in my life. The present age, in the sense of ... being kind of a non-person, a blob that kind of fits in with everybody else because that's what everybody else does and you don't know any better or have any desire to do anything differently. I can see how I went through the aesthetic part of being a pleasure seeker in high school —if it looks like fun, let's try it .... Nancy and I had talked about (the stages) a lot. The thing that upset my wife and I was ... the impression that few people reach the religious stage .... That could frighten people. It frightened us.

Cynthia C., thirty-seven years old and a director of data processing, shared this:

> I don't think Kierkegaard has it .... I can see where you go through definite stages of progression ... but I think they can also be intermixed. I don't think that at one particular time you can say that you're totally in one stage or another .... I don't think God constantly calls people to higher stages; I think there are plateaus and times when you're just left to rest for a while .... I think it's a pulsating kind of thing .... I disagree with his idea of sin a whole lot. I don't think we're as sinful as what Kierkegaard seems to think we are. I think if you try to know yourself and try to become the individual that you are, which is one of the things he's been saying, what you're going to find is a human being doing human things .... Kierkegaard doesn't stress community and I think community is a strong Christian ideal. I think he stresses a whole lot of individuality, which is also a strong Christian ideal, but I think community needs to be stressed .... Robert (her friend) says you need to interpret Jesus through your own experience, not Kierkegaard's. I think truth is subjective. What you live is your truth.

Barbara P., fifty-seven years old and a registered nurse, shared this:

> I didn't talk with others (about Kierkegaard) but I did

> leave papers for Angelo (her husband) to read. I mentioned to Sister that I'm taking this class on how to be a Christian and you, you just put your hand on the plow and you do it. God seems to give you what it takes to do it, without thinking about it .... I think the choosing part--that was very good. You know, the way you make a choice and commit yourself--that part was very good .... We have to be told; everybody has to be told--otherwise we just drift along.

Suzanne S., thirty-six years old and a health statistician, shared this:

> (in regard to Kierkegaard's picture of faith) I believe that unachievable goals are a real prompter and I find that I probably set a lot of them for myself .... In calling them unachievable, it accords with what the world would say, OK, but to me nothing is unachievable in Christ .... I felt very much on a feeling level with Kierkegaard's anguish, his hopes, his longings, and I felt his utter disappointment. I could feel a man who wanted so much for everyone and who absolutely got sucked up in despair and disappointment--and that is the tragedy of the thing. I'm encouraged by his hopes and I'm in sorrow over the tragedy that I see happening. I hope that doesn't happen to me .... I want so much for the church. I want so much the kingdom. I long for people to know, to experience Christ, to experience what life in the kingdom is and there's a passion--a desire that is so strong yet the frustration of myself wondering "Am I doing anything? What can I do? What should I do? What does the Lord want me to do?" I saw (in Kierkegaard) initially hope, but a succumbing to despair.

I found these interview sessions very encouraging. People seemed personally involved with what had gone on. Although occasionally there were indications that Kierkegaard had not been understood, there had indeed been a stimulation of personal interest and care. People appreciated being asked their opinions and their responses to the process, and I'm sure this deepened any real learning that took place.

Feedback: Oral History Technique (five people interviewed by a third and unrelated party)

In order to see if the previous narrators would hold the same opinions after the passage of a month, and in the presence of a different interviewer from the project's main presenter, a third person (Bonnie Gartshore of Pacific Grove, California) asked them questions "on behalf of an inquiry group of the American bishops." Some significant remarks, transcribed from tape, follow.

> Ray S.: I liked (the Kierkegaard class). I wish it was longer and more detailed. (I especially liked) the seven page copy of Fragments, Kierkegaard's analysis dealing with why Jesus came. (Kierkegaard) put himself in the place of God, how God would feel, the sorrow God feels because he cannot love us and receive our love as God. That eight or nine page handout was beautiful. It was better than the whole program! .... Kierkegaard says sin is despair--and I think that's right. Being brought up in Catholic traditions, we get side-tracked and think that sin is eating meat on Friday, not attending mass on Sunday, saying a lie or what-not. We categorize sin. Sin really is despair .... You know you're not whole and if you're not whole that means you're not with God .... It's nice to have an outline of how one develops .... If the church would only bring people close to Jesus not intellectually but to have people know Jesus ... and to give people a sense of not being afraid to step out. We're all trapped in the present age to a great extent--we like to think about things and rationalize and get a group discussion about it but never step out and do anything.
>
> Dennis H.: I could relate Kierkegaard's theory to my own life, so that gave it credibility in that I knew personally that I could see myself going through some of these stages .... The one thing that did upset my wife and I was ... the impression that few people make it to the religious stage (whether he equates that with being saved or not, I don't know) and probably very few if any children have gone through all those phases (i.e., Kierkegaard's stages) .... I wish the course had been longer .... Until you can go back and look at the whole thing (the whole sweep of

Kierkegaard's theory), it can be disturbing to you. Maybe this isn't bad. If you're not making any waves, ... maybe you're just watering everything down and telling (people) what they want to hear, and they're patting you on the back .... Until you're upsetting some people, because the world isn't the way that Jesus wants it right now, there must be a lot of things going wrong ....

Cynthia C.: I spoke to a couple of people (about Kierkegaard) and talked to the lady up the street .... I don't think the Kierkegaard class changed my thinking. It opened it up a little bit but it didn't change it .... I think there was an awful lot of thought generated in the classes that I went to. There was a lot of really good discussion and thinking discussion. I think it really opened up people's minds--maybe more than mine. I think it had a real impact on some of the people in that class. I'm not really what you'd call a Christian lady. I don't follow Christian faith right now. So I'm coming from a different space right now.

Barbara P.: (Kierkegaard's theory) reinforced what I was beginning to feel myself .... The idea that ... the more you do the more you're asked to do, and that you do have a capacity that you're not aware of. I'm finding that in real life now .... I feel even more sure than I did before that (God) is calling me to do something .... I did look (Kierkegaard) up in the encyclopedia.

Suzanne S.: (The Kierkegaard classes) were all right. It was fine .... It's hard for me to judge because I speak in a sense a bit from adult education starvation .... It seemed to me a little more psychological rather than dealing with the spiritual ... and I'm not really interested in the psychological approach, even though that comes into things .... I'm more interested in ... the biblical .... (The psychological approach) bypassed identifying what a Christian was, it bypassed bringing the Gospel message into it ... and went strictly to a psychological description of a process ... of psychological maturity. And when it got to the point where you would talk about Christ ... it was presented that at this point Kierkegaard believed that practically nobody ever reaches this .... I thought, "Why should I become a Christian if it's so impossible ...." I thought, "Had I not previously learned the Word, I would not have been evangelized." I would have probably turned up my hands .... But for adult education for, let's say, prepared Christians I would say

> that it probably stimulated some thought. I would find that it maybe helped to concretize (my beliefs) in my own mind, so by bristling the hair on my back I had to think about what I really believed ..... (It was a really valuable tool (for this).

There was no dramatic difference between the feedback the respondents had given me and what they shared with this third person interviewer. The consistency suggests that the feedback is accurate. It appears that some forgetting had occurred, but there still remained significant evidence of intrigue, interest or concern over Kierkegaard's theory and people's lives in the light of it. I'm sure the interviewing process deepened the learning experience.

### Feedback: My Personal Observations

I had been impressed with the electricity Kierkegaard generated in the context of daily mass homilies and on the retreat. Much more vigorous, however, was the response of those that came to the Kierkegaard class. The discussions were *very* spirited; questions, objections, affirmations, examples were immediate and direct. I sensed a very high degree of interest in his notions of the present age, the universality of sin, *angst* as a positive experience, the relationship of being an individual to being in a community, the importance of choosing the paradox *absolutely*, the tremendous exertion of faith. In connection with the last issue, there was annoyed resistance to the idea that God was calling people to something so lofty and so incredibly strenuous. (A number of people admitted going home after session IV with angry feelings and a resolution to come back the following week and vigorously disagree.) I was pleased that they felt free to dissent. Significant portions of several of our get-togethers were spent allowing people to hash out some of these matters among themselves.

My impression that the Kierkegaard class was especially effective was further supported by some disconnected and circumstantial evidence. For one thing, the local Christian book store of good size (Ave Maria Community bookstore in San Jose) sold out its entire supply of twenty Kierkegaard books during the two weeks following the class. Many of them were mail-ordered from Salinas. In addition, the small local library's entire stock of books by or about Kierkegaard (all eight books!) enjoyed rigorous circulation for the subsequent two months. Also, I received, more than five months later, a letter from someone who had attended the Kierkegaard class:

> Sometimes I still recall and reflect on the talks you gave in Salinas several months ago. The series concerning Kierkegaard. It is very helpful to me still and I hope for a lifetime. For example: Trust Him, Copy Him, Obey Him and choosing the absolute - ABSOLUTELY. And I remember you mentioning the present age and when someone goes to do something heroic no one supports them but is more likely to persecute .... I've thought more of decision and serious commitment in my life ....

Why the increase of personal involvement in the Kierkegaard class, in contrast to the daily mass homilies and the retreat? It may be that this was simply a group that contained particularly concerned or vivacious individuals! It may be that, by the time I was presenting Kierkegaard the third time around, I was more integrated and skilled in my approach. Or it may be that the class sessions, spaced as they were with one full week between each session, allowed greater occasion for people to come subjectively to grips with the questions raised--with less interference from "the public." At this point I can reach no conclusion about the correct explanation.

### D. Conclusion

The purpose of this exploratory project was to collect soft, impressionistic data to help reach an informed opinion about the pastoral usefulness of Kierkegaard's theory of human development. In order to do this, Kierkegaard was presented to groups in three typical pastoral settings--a series of daily mass homilies, a retreat and an adult education class. Questionnaires, oral history interviewing techniques (conducted both by myself and an "unrelated" third party) and my personal observations were then collected and analyzed.

*The questionnaires strongly suggest that Kierkegaard has a great contemporary pastoral appeal and power*. The number of questionnaires returned imply strong interest in Kierkegaard. Although only 22% of the participants at the daily mass series returned their questionnaires (this was the average return Charles Glock has warned me to expect), 80% of the retreatants and 61% of the participants in the class responded. The *substance* of the questionnaires implies pastoral usefulness for Kierkegaard: A solid majority of respondents answered affirmatively to the five questions probing the pastoral usefulness of

Kierkegaard from various angles. The _form_ of the questionnaire responses also encourages the use of Kierkegaard in pastoral settings. Very few people were content to give one word responses. There was instead a great outpouring of reflection and response, in many cases covering both sides of the questionnaire and flowing out over additional sheets as well.

_The oral history interviewing techniques strongly suggest that Kierkegaard has a strong contemporary pastoral appeal and power._ Most of those interviewed displayed an excitement over his ideas and how they applied to their own lives. They used some Kierkegaardian terminology in reporting back, and this suggests that at least some integration took place. The fact that both the second "unrelated" interviewer and I obtained substantially the same feedback suggests that this feedback was accurate.

_My personal observations also suggest that Kierkegaard has a strong contemporary pastoral appeal and power._ I felt a high level of interest and involvement in most of the discussion periods (particularly in regard to Kierkegaard's ideas of angst, sin and faith, and the issue of individual vis-a-vis community). There was a generous supply of questions, affirmations, objections and examples. The fact that such surprisingly large numbers of people came to the Kierkegaard presentations at all, and that the numbers attending remained constant, suggests a certain sustained interest and enthusiasm.

There was occasional evidence, it is true, that people had not understood clearly parts of the presentation. In fact, some people probably drew things out of the discussions that would make Kierkegaard turn over in his grave. Even in these cases, however, there was abundant evidence that people took his issues seriously, struggled with them personally, and took stands. Kierkegaard himself would surely not take issue with this.

I had been warned by Charles Glock to be on the lookout for suggestive contrasts among the feedbacks for the various Kierkegaard presentations. I must say that, with the exception of the dramatically fewer questionnaires returned for the Aptos series of mass homilies (for which I have no explanation) and the greater intensity of the response to the Kierkegaard class (already discussed), I found none.

The main drift of our soft impressionistic subjective data is clear, however. The questionnaires, oral history interviewing techniques and my personal observations all strongly support the contention that _Kierkegaard is of great contemporary pastoral usefulness in a wide variety of pastoral settings_.

# CHAPTER VII

## THE PASTORAL USEFULNESS OF KIERKEGAARD'S THEORY OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT: OVERVIEW AND POSTSCRIPT

The Christian Church has been commanded to proclaim the good news of God's self-communication in Jesus. Surveys and common pastoral experience indicate, however, a decrease of interest and enthusiasm regarding Church proclamation. A number of explanations have been offered. It is not up to the church to make God's word "relevant". Yet it certainly is up to us to avoid making it appear trivial and irrelevant.

Theology is constitutive of proclamation. It is therefore one of the preaching elements that needs to be examined from time to time for pastoral usefulness. A theology useful for Church proclamation must not merely be true scripturally, magisterially, dialectically. It must also evidence a power to reach people--to communicate, intrigue, challenge, unsettle. The given Gospel (enduring insight of neo-orthodoxy) must be proclaimed to the given age (enduring insight of liberalism).

What qualities should a theology have to be pastorally effective for our given age? A survey of three major theologians who have dealt with this question--Josef Jungmann, Paul Tillich and Karl Rahner--yields an interesting consensus. Although the writers come from individual vantage points and use their words with different colorations, they all agree that a pastorally useful theology today must be historical (in vital touch with contemporary questions and concerns), anthropocentric (experiential), Christocentric, and mystagogic.

These precise qualities appear to characterize the theory of human development of Soren Kierkegaard. He is certainly concerned with vital contemporary questions--the current lack of willingness to enter commitments, the manipulation of the individual by the public and its media, and the trivialization of Christianity from a subjective existence of the highest intensity to a mere notional assent to doctrine. In addition, he is experiential to a degree that impresses even contemporary psychotherapists. He is Christocentric--the God-Man being the absolute paradox to which his system points and the condition for our becoming fully alive "individual selves." And he is mystagogic--prayer-producing, subjectivity-arousing--both in theory and practice.

It seemed appropriate to hypothesize that Kierkegaard's theory of human development is pastorally useful--and yet it seemed important to test out this hypothesis. After all, communication is a very complex process and there may be in Kierkegaard certain "intervening factors" that make him unsuitable for contemporary use. Accordingly, a project was developed in which Kierkegaard was presented to people in three typical pastoral settings--a series of homilies at mass, a retreat, and an adult education class. (Conscious attempts were made to "be Kierkegaardian in presenting Kierkegaard"--to respect the subjectivity and freedom of the participants by providing time for reflection, remarks, objections, etc.)

Feedback was collected from the various groups through questionnaires, oral history interviews (by myself and an apparently unrelated third party) and my own personal observations. This feedback, documented and described in the preceding section, suggests a very high level of pastoral usefulness and power in Kierkegaard's theory of human development. Of special significance was the energetic response to Kierkegaard's ideas of angst, sin and faith, and the issue of individual/community.

The performance of this exercise has been a source of great personal satisfaction to me. I am convinced that similar experiments, using the work of different theologians, can be of immense practical value to the church as it tries to find the most effective way to communicate the given Gospel to the given age.

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